PHASES OF RELIGION AND CULTURE

BY

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HIND KITABS LIMITED
PUBLISHERS : : BOMBAY

First Published, 1949

Printed by J. R. Bharati at Udayana Press, Kandivli, Bombay, and
Published by V. Kulkarni, Hind Kitabs Limited,
261--263 Hornby Road, Bombay

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THE WORLD AND INDIA*

I

India and World Culture

Before we consider what India has meant to world culture let us, for a moment, dwell on the underlying idea of culture itself. As I understand the term, culture is a way of life, an interpretation given by each mind and soul to the environment. India's influence upon the world has been profound, but not always recognized. What, to us Indians, do this civilization and this culture of India represent? Taking the history of India in relation to the things of the mind and the spirit, what are the essential ideas or ideals that have been energizing this country through the millennia?

The first specific contribution of India to the world is what I have always called fearlessness, *abhaya* in the language of the Upanishads. Very few items of speculation, whether directed towards the existence or the qualities and attributes of Divinity, or the mind and the soul of man, have escaped the investigation and analysis of the Indian thinker. Many theories, apparently foreign to what is usually associated with Indian thought, have been put forward from as early as the 5000-6000 years ago attributed to our Vedic chronology down to this day. Foreigners who are our friends, and many more who are 'un-friends', are anxious to emphasize the

* *Two lectures delivered under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Culture, Bangalore, in September 1948. They admirably complement each other, bringing out the ideological and material intercourse which has gone on for long centuries, in which India has received as well as given much. Together they bring their testimony to the fundamental oneness of the human family, and suggest the lines on which India has still a great and significant contribution to make to ethics and world thought. The first, "India and World Culture", was published in 'The Aryan Path' for January 1949 and the second, "World Culture and India", in the same journal for February 1949.*

heterogeneity, the lack of unity of Indian life, and such an emphasis is ostensibly correct so far as it concerns the attention bestowed throughout our history on the most apparently incongruous speculations. The teaching of the Buddha, whose philosophy did not demand the existence of a Supreme Being, as we understand it, the philosophy of the Vedanta, which does not postulate the existence of a personal God, as many religions do, the philosophy of the devotee which culminated in the complete submission of the self to a Supreme embodied in a personal form—all these varieties of thought, however contradictory, are yet part of our heritage. This coexistence of diversity has kept alive what I call fearlessness, the boldness of the Indian approach to the problems of both the here and the hereafter.

The second aspect is that of rhythm, called *dharma* in some of our books, what the Vedas called *rta*, the science of harmony and of supreme order. The idea that things happen not through accidental circumstances, or any intervention, human, semi-divine or divine, but in ordered simultaneity, according to a law existing from before time, the idea of the continuity of existence, that is India's specific contribution to world thought. To the Indian mind, the life that is lived by each, whether belonging to the vegetable, the animal or the human kingdom, does not culminate in what we call death, does not commence with what we call birth, and is not coexistent with the turmoil and the struggle, the perplexities and the difficulties of our existence. This is a direct following out of the idea of *rta*, that is, life is regarded as a great harmony, a harmony which, in the language of music, involves some discord, a harmony which swells and progresses through heights and depths of life, while the ultimate of life continues for ever. That idea, which afterwards found expression in the doctrine of evolution, was one of the fundamental bases of Indian thought.

The main contributions made by India to world thought have been the postulates of the continuity of life, the evolution of existence, the immanent order of everything that

happens, and the necessity to approach all these problems and to carry them to their logical conclusion, without being afraid of the mental or spiritual consequences of the thought. Why do I say that all these ideas are contributions to the world? Indian culture in the past has been analogous to a subterranean spring that has been fertilizing many countries which have not always acknowledged that fertilization, but the subterranean river has its unseen but formative influence not only on the mental landscape but also other phenomena.

Let us take certain definite categories of religious and philosophical thought. Many of us have read of the *Avataras*, the ten manifestations of Vishnu. Some of us believe in them literally. Others scout the idea, but let us analyse it. What are the ten *Avataras?* The first is of the world of Matsya, occupying the universe when, even before the birth of the reptiles, the fishes were the first evidence of life. And then we come to the period of the amphibia, then to that of the half-man, to that of the dwarf-man, then to the period of the primitive, the uncontrolled, the impulsive man. Then we come to the period of the man more or less perfect, until that man is equated with and vanishes into the Supreme.

Some refer to this as a prefiguration of the evolutionary doctrine. Others say that this is one of the efforts of the ever-subtle Indian mind to find a satisfactory explanation for what is really insoluble. But the whole of our philosophy, of our religion, is essentially founded upon an acceptance of the facts of life which involve a gradual evolution from the more primitive to the less primitive forms, not only of outer existence and life, but also of the inner, from mere awareness to intellectual subtlety and spiritual exaltation.

Now these ideas have found expression in Zoroastrianism. They have found expression in the religion of Egypt. It was not long ago that there was found on the Temple of the Sun, Ra, in Thebes, an inscription which recalls the *nama-rupa* doctrine of the Upanishads. The Upanishads declare that the world was made of one primordial material, and that the difference between overt manifestations was all a matter of

nama-rupa, names and forms. As the energizing consciousness functions, so life transforms itself, evolves. And in that inscription on the Egyptian temple, you find it stated that the whole cosmos of gods and men is one. It is all a matter of name and form. Some people have said that this is a quotation by the ancient Egyptians from one of the sacred books of India. That does not matter. The fact remains that one of the fundamental concepts of Indian thought was existent and recognized in ancient Egypt. So far as Indian history and Indian thought are concerned, the excavations in Mohen-jo-daro and Harappa, in various parts of the Punjab and in Central Asia, all make it clear that there was much osmosis or interpenetration of cultures.

Two thousand years ago it seems to have been possible for some persons to go from here to Peru and Mexico. You have only to examine early South American arts and architecture to find that the faces are exactly like the South Indian faces. Even at present the colour of the people is more or less like ours, but that was not what astounded me so much as the circumstance that their temples are built more or less on the pattern of the South Indian temples. The culture is very similar. I do not wish to enter into any controversy, but one of the royal dynasties of Peru was called the Ayers — not that at this day I expect the Indian Ayers to start an expedition to Peru to vindicate their claims in that far-off country—and, it is obvious, there was a tremendous transference of culture across miles of ocean.

Also in Java and the Far Eastern countries, and throughout French Indo-China and Cambodia, you get very vivid glimpses of life in the past which was closely inter-linked with the life of India. Their architecture is the same and the people are called by Hindu names, though they profess the Mohammedan religion. The name Arjuna is very common from Burma to the Philippines.

This influence is not least illustrated in Islam. It is generally believed that, Islam being monotheistic and Hinduism being pantheistic or polytheistic, they are fundamentally different.

But look at the Sufi manifestations of the Islamic religion, for instance. Islam has been responsible for a development exactly parallel to that of higher or philosophical Hinduism. The poet Jami speaks to his Friend—the Sufi poet always called the Supreme his Friend, or his Beloved—and he says, "Will you not give me a place on that divan where there is no place for two?" In other words, he regards the complete identity of the human soul and the Over-Soul as one of the essentials of his doctrine.

The influence of Indian thought and culture has been very deep though it was not always acknowledged. There has been much more interchange of ideas and ideals between India and other world cultures, Zoroastrian, Persian, Christian, Egyptian and Islamic, than many are willing to confess or to admit. Take, for instance, the idea that most people are now forced to accept, that of transmigration. The West regards it as something foreign to the Christian ideal, but a blind man was taken to the Lord Jesus, who was asked, "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" What is the meaning of that?

The doctrine of transmigration was as old as Pythagoras in Greece, on whom the Indian philosophers exercised a profound influence. The whole theory of the Christian religion is not essentially different from that underlying certain aspects of our Buddhistic culture. There has been interchange of ideas. If we grant that not only in philosophical concepts but also in many matters of art, there has been a profound influence exercised by India in the past, can it play, does it deserve to play, any part in the evolution of the world culture of the future? Yes. What is the position of the world today? Disequilibrium, it has been said, is a factor of present-day society. We are always apt to call this an age of transition. In fact, right through the ages, people have said theirs was an age of transition. There was a time, about the birth of the French Revolution, when Wordsworth said:—

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive
but to be young was very heaven.

Many of us, when we were working for the political emancipation of this country, dreamed great dreams and the most prominent of these dreamers, who collated the dreams into very practical ideals at the same time, was Mahatma Gandhi. He dreamed of making a new world, but is it not correct to say that at this moment we are in the midst of a reaction, a certain disillusionment? We have expected so much, such rapid results. We are not getting results, and we are, therefore, feeling hurt and angry and disgusted with our surroundings. The unfortunate Governments are called upon to handle almost insuperable problems, and the philosopher is blamed who is not able to present the ultimate solution to world problems. This feeling is due to a forgetting of those great fundamental truths which in the past irrigated the mental and spiritual lands of the world. The cultural life of India has not yet changed. Its boundaries are the same, and its development will be the same, provided we are equal to our responsibilities.

One of the principal factors responsible for the malaise of the world is the loss of the consciousness that the world is one, and that it can remain one. We have all read Wendell Willkie's *One World*, but its lessons have not sunk very deep. The oneness of humanity has not yet become a real factor in our inner consciousness or in our outer life.

At this stage someone may interrupt and ask: "How does it happen that you are speaking in relation to India of the oneness of the world when we ourselves are not united? India has been in the past torn by factions, has consciously and otherwise created a lot of difference between community and community and has victimized certain sections of its population and behaved unjustly towards them. What right have we then to speak of one world?"

My answer is this—that humanity is travelling in a spiral, the wheel of life turns high and low, and very often it is unable to translate its ideals into action. There are countries which proclaim great ideals, countries which say their constitutions insist on the equality of men, but I have myself travelled

through countries in which many injustices and pretences exist. I became 'white' for purposes of accommodation in railway carriages, buses, attendance at meetings and so on, but others fairer than myself were debarred. But these countries proclaim egalitarian ideals. They are trying to put them into practice. The ultimate test should be: Is the ideal present in the minds and souls of men? Are they trying, however imperfectly, to translate these ideals into action?

All that I am concerned to point out is that, right through the ages, the complete oneness not only of humanity but of all animate life and indeed of all inanimate objects, has been one of the fundamental bases of Indian thought, and I submit that this is an aspect on which we might dwell, although at this moment neither India nor any other country lives up to it. Whether India can do so is another matter. But it is to my mind a very significant factor that India can give that rest and that poise which come from the ever-present consciousness of this One Life. That is the main contribution that India can make to the solution of world problems.

What do I mean by this? I was travelling in the U.S.A., the most highly mechanized country of the world. American machinery is extraordinarily efficient, and American standards of life are tremendously high. One might imagine that country had solved the problems of well-being and human happiness in so far as is humanly possible. I reached San Francisco a week after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi; I found everyone plunged in grief. More than one person spoke to me—and I met not only the politician, but the literary man and woman, the banker, the representative of labour, and various other people—and they all said: "We are suffering from lack of leadership. We are suffering from lack of poise and mental balance. There is such a tremendous hurry to do things, to get things done, to achieve things, that there is no room for thought. We are craving for something, we do not know what." And the spectacle of Gandhiji as a man who had achieved poise, mental balance, conveyed a message which, however untranslatable, was, nevertheless, a

message of quiet and calm and contentment, the presence of an object of healing throughout the world. And Gandhiji represented one of a long line of men who sought peace and rest by several means.

Can India do anything in respect of these matters? I submit that she can, provided she retains her heritage. She can, however, only retain that heritage if she founds her thought and action on that continuity, that oneness of life to which I have adverted, that evolution, that inescapable rhythm, the order of Nature. If those ideas which at one time pervaded our literature, our philosophy and our art, ideas which made it possible for us to understand the apparent diversity of Divinity, to conceive all forms as manifestations of the One, if that sense of unity and of calm can not only be felt by us but also communicated to others, we shall be making the greatest contribution that India could make to world culture.

Mere satisfying of wants has not sufficed us. It has led to the creation of more wants. The craze for achievement has only awakened the desire for greater achievement, and today the United Nations Organization is toiling through its unwieldy agenda in perplexity and in confusion and with divided aims, because no one is willing that things should rest anywhere. People must be moving, rushing. It is not so bad in England as in America, but all the world over there is this feeling of restlessness, of trying to get something done with the least possible delay and in the shortest possible period. And when all this has been done, what is the net result? You produce one more machine and that machine is scrapped the moment it is produced. You produce one type of destructive agency — a tank or a bomber — and it is at once out-moded. No doubt Science has manifested itself most wonderfully through the mind of man in the West, in the shape of achievements in laboratories, by organized research and so on. India has achieved results both in science and in other departments of knowledge more through intuition than through experiment. We have to learn the arts of analysis and experimentation. Others have to learn from us perhaps in respect of what I have

called intuition. This world can never be lop-sided. It cannot be divided artificially.

To sum up, my thesis is this: There are certain fundamental aspects of humanity in which Indians have definitely specialized. There have been certain root ideas characteristic of Indian civilization, and these are valuable and can be of value to the world. My plea is that these characteristics should not be jettisoned, should not be forgotten. They are of service to the world, but we can serve the world through these ideas only to the extent to which we are true to them. My plea is that we should earnestly strive to be true to them.

II

World Culture and India

My task on the last occasion was to indicate in what respects the culture of the world had been influenced by certain basic principles of Indian thought. My subject today is "World Culture and India". It is hardly necessary to indicate what should be beyond controversy, namely, that in whatever region of life or of affairs Shakespeare's maxim, "Neither a borrower nor a lender be", may be correct, it is not correct in the region of the mind and the soul. The history of the world is both an illustration and an embodiment of mutual impact and influence. However much the nations of the world are in conflict with one another, or have been so throughout the ages, there has been a lively contact in the intellectual and moral spheres between the rest of the world and India.

An illustration comes to my mind, taken from our epics, of the fact that perhaps antagonism is a quicker way to understanding than love. You know the story of the great Asuras who were ostensible opponents of but real co-operators with Vishnu. They were guilty of certain sins and errors of judgment and, according to the universal law of Nature and of *Karma*, they had to atone for their sins and their follies. That atonement, according to the curse pronounced upon them by an irascible *Rishi*, was that they should abandon their stations

within the gates of heaven and descend into the realms of mortality. The choice was given to them to be devotees of the Lord for seven generations, or to be antagonists for a more limited number of births. After some hesitation, they chose the latter, and a wise choice it proved to be because, as the legends themselves point out, a man who hates another, who is constantly jealous of the other and wants to supplant him or to do away with him, keeps him more constantly in mind than the mere lover or friend who has other avocations and can only bestow a few hours or minutes in the day on his friend. The Asuras preferred to be enemies, so that the great Lord might be constantly in their minds and they might the sooner regain their places in heaven.

So it seems to me that cultures, even amongst nations which have ranged themselves against each other, have the habit of spreading to the rival community. We all remember the saying of the Roman poet that Rome captured Greece, but the vanquished became the victor. The art and literature of Greece so profoundly affected the art and ethos of Rome that the achievements of Rome in literature, science, art and architecture were replicas of Greek ideals.

In the *Gita*, which is itself an integration of earlier sources of knowledge, the summation of the cultural unity of the world and also a full compendium of life's messages, the Universe is typified as a tree whose roots are above in the Infinity of the Supreme. Its branches spread downwards. The eternal tree of life and therefore of culture, which is the translation of life in terms of art and science and philosophy, has its roots in the infinite and spreads its branches in the world below. Our instruments or phenomena of knowledge are spread throughout the world, though the root comes from on high. That seems to me the true illustration of culture, and what it connotes. It arises from one root—the fundamental spirit animating the world, which is striving, struggling, dreaming, aspiring and achieving—and the branches, the results of that striving, are seen in the various manifestations of human genius. It is therefore right to regard the literature,

the art and the culture of the world as springing from the same source and developing.

The word 'idiot' has now acquired a special significance, though the original Greek word from which it is derived meant the man who lived for himself, who regarded himself as the centre of the universe. Many nineteenth century European thinkers and economists at the turn of the century were largely 'idiots' in the Greek sense. The philosophy, the speculation, of that time not only concerned itself with a very narrow aspect of humanity, but also closed its doors against all outside influences. To them what is called the economic struggle, the survival of the fittest was the reality. A man could put down all competitors if he lived according to the doctrine of the weakest going to the wall or "Devil take the hindmost!" That was essentially a cramping, anti-social system of thought.

It appears to me that there is great danger today of such idiocy spreading throughout the world. Take the industrial technique of today, its lop-sidedness, its over-specialization, the cramping effect of some narrow activity which really takes the mind away from the tradition of loveliness and the inspiring influence which craftsmen had at their disposal. They were producing things of beauty. They had certain prototypes or archetypes, but they could evolve intricate or simple designs of variegated pattern, whether in colour, in carving, in textiles, in pottery or something else; but today machine production is so complicated that no one can do more than look after one corner of the machine or one little bit of a factory. While the worker has a responsibility for something which goes into an integrated whole he cannot possibly reflect upon, nor even envisage, the real effect of his work. We cannot avoid the advent of industrialization, but this lop-sidedness is inseparable from the industrial mechanism.

For the harmonious ordering of the world, therefore, it is necessary for us not to close our eyes and ears to the inner significance of life and of culture. In the past, so far as India was concerned, there was no employment of industrial technique, and China still reposed in the quietness of the

Confucian and Lao-Tzean philosophy. A Chinese philosopher has uttered a great truth which we should remember: "He who stands on tiptoe does not stand firm." When you are constantly looking ahead, when you are constantly anxious to move forward and stand on tiptoe, there is likelihood of a physical collapse. And he proceeds to supplement his observation thus: "He who takes the longest strides does not necessarily walk the fastest or for the longest time." In talking of the sum total of our achievements and culture, these maxims must be borne in mind so that no technique, no single approach to life, may be regarded as all-sufficient and final.

And now I shall proceed with the indication of certain directions in which India has benefited, and those in which India can still benefit from outside cultural influences. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* there is reference to the embalming of a mummy by certain peoples with the idea that after a while the body returns to life; and it is said that this looking upon the body as the equivalent of the soul is an error to be avoided. I cite this to show that, as early as the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, there was a recognizable contact between the Indian civilization and the Egyptian. There was something more than that. As readers of the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* will know, and as what has been recently unearthed and described by Budge and others testifies, the root principles of both the Vedanta and the Adwaita systems were outlined by the Egyptians in language very reminiscent of our scriptures. There had been osmosis and absorption.

When we come to Zoroastrian times, the field is very much more clear. Zoroastrianism is one side of the shield; the reverse side is Hindu. Our Asuras are their Devas, their Devas are our Asuras. I mean nothing uncomplimentary. But it is clear from the progress of this one community through that portion of Asia which was a kind of intellectual and psychical watershed that the two branches of the same race diversified after a separation of ideals and practices. The language of the Zoroastrians and the language of the Vedas are almost identical. The same words are used in the *Gathas*

and in the hymns of the *Rig Veda*, and the general principles are the same, although the cosmology and the theology differ.

But one matter has not been adequately explored. It has struck me that India has been vitally and profoundly influenced by this Persian or Arabic strain of thought. The whole doctrine of Zoroastrianism may be said to be a description of the eternal struggle between the principles of good and of evil, which have been deliberately brought into existence for a mysterious purpose. The doctrine of Purusha and Prakriti describes the same dualism in different terms but it is essentially analogous although apparently different.

Another subject that has not received the attention it deserves from scholars and thinkers is how in India in the old days certain ideas now associated with specific systems of philosophy were the prerogative of the Kshatriyas. In all our more ancient Upanishads, the proposition is often advanced that whereas the Brahmin concentrated on worship and prayer and sacrifice, the Kshatriya brought into existence those speculations which are now regarded as part of the Upanishadic lore. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* we hear of a person who comes to a ruler for enlightenment on the mysteries of existence and asks for instruction in the problems of life and death and immortality. It was later that Upanishadic learning became the essential task of a Brahmin. After all, it does not matter really whether the Brahmin or the Kshatriya originated the speculations. They became essentially part of our national fabric. Nevertheless it is clear there was a stage in Indian thought when certain aspects of philosophical enquiry were claimed by certain groups as their prerogative—some of these groups being associated with Scythia and other localities.

The Greeks came here and helped to develop dramaturgy though a few plays had been produced which may date from earlier than Alexander. The Greeks were a drama-loving people. Drama represented the climax of Greek genius apart from Homer. Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and others are among the foremost dramatic poets of the world; barring Shakespeare, they have the highest claim in the West to literary

and dramatic genius. Now it appears to me that India showed true wisdom in this matter. She bodily took over the whole of the stage apparatus and appurtenances of the Greeks. The word in Sanskrit for "drop curtain" is *yavanika*, derived from Ionia. Formerly, perhaps, Indian plays had been produced as the Greek plays were originally — the chorus coming to the front and describing what had taken place between the several scenes and acts. The drop curtain made it possible to present act after act, scene after scene. The Indian plays themselves are very like some Greek plays.

But this is not the only Greek contribution. Certain types of Indian sculpture were largely influenced by the Greeks. Sculpture, according to Indian ideas, did not depend on actual representation of form from the anatomical point of view. It sought the symbol. If you look at Nataraja, you see not the glorification of the male form congealed in motion but the ideal of infinite energy transformed into the harmony of pose. These six-, eight- and four-armed figures were symbols of universality and infinitude, of plenitude of power, of reaching out. The whole idea of Indian sculpture, as is made clear in the Sastras, was that the object of art was not to typify the perfect human form, but to elucidate the significance underlying it, the striving which was man's contribution to the world effort or the peace which was attainment. The same thing might be said of Krishna playing on the flute, and of various other classic examples of Indian sculpture.

But with Greek influence there came a new idea, the production of a perfect human form, as conceived in the world below and outlined for the purpose of one's reaching by contemplation of a perfect body to the spiritual body—the doctrine elaborated by Plato and in the writings of the Neo-Platonists, that the sight of a form of immaculate beauty, whether of man, woman or beast, had such a purifying, refining, searching and ennobling power that it stirred the soul and made it conform to the harmony of the universe. That was an idea reflected later on in Mahayana Buddhism in sculpture created for arousing the sentiment of beauty and

compassion which it embodied. These later developments were undoubtedly due to the Greek influence which was complementary to the Hindu ideal of sculpture.

The Greek influence is found not only in dramaturgy and sculpture but also in philosophy. There is no doubt that some of the later philosophical developments of our people owe a great deal to Greek thought, as Greek thought owes a great deal to Upanishadic thought. Pythagoras himself studied Indian philosophy according to tradition and started the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls. That doctrine was current coin in Greek philosophy, and indeed, owing to the influence of the Greek philosphers, became part of the web of European thought.

Just as in the early development of Greek philosophy, India played a great part, similarly she played a very great part in the mysteries of the Dionysian and the various Orphic rites that were among the chief characteristics of later Greek philosophy. These bear such remarkable resemblances to our Tantric philosophy and Tantric practices, that there must have been very close contact between the two systems of thought and ritual.

When we come to the influence of Buddhism on China, and that of China on India, there is no doubt that there have been many interpenetrations. There are records which show that Chinese pottery and silk-making had a very ancient and deep influence on Indian art. It seems very likely that the very doctrine of *Ahimsa* which the Chinese philosophers preached at the same time as the Buddha, or even earlier, has played a great part in the evolution of the doctrine in India.

All these things show a very remarkable mutual process of assimilation. Our intellectual fabric today is shot through with European ideals and European modes of life and of expression. That I am talking to you in English is proof of that. However much I should be ashamed of it according to some, I cannot possibly essay to talk to you as I have done this evening except in a non-Indian language. We cannot avoid being influenced by Western thought and modes of life.

There is much more to it than merely the desire for certain modern luxuries and amenities, for sanitary appliances, for drawing-rooms, and European dress. I am not referring to the externals of civilization but I am rather thinking of the spirit of the West. There is no doubt that during the last three or four centuries in Europe and in the countries which derive their culture from Europe, a new development of human enterprise and thought-forms has taken place. Whereas the Indian thinker, the Chinese sage, the ancient philosopher generally, was content to reflect upon himself and within himself, and to derive his ideas with logical sequence from revelations which came from intuition, modern Europe and America have perfected the technique of experimentation which was present only in a comparatively undeveloped form in India. We have heard of the surgical operations performed in the past, and some of the excavations in Egypt and India make it clear that, in operations on the eye and the brain, instruments were used about 4,000 to 5,000 years ago that are like those used in hospitals today.

There is, however, no gainsaying the fact that after a tremendous development—in which the Indians and Arabs bore their part and the Persians theirs—in astronomy, in mathematics, in algebra and in geometry, there was a kind of lull in India's relations with the rest of the world. It may be due to the political upheaval which was imposed upon us, partly because of our insurrections and partly as the result of invasions and partly perhaps as a reaction of our own intellectual make-up. But the Islamic period saw some change in this respect. Islamic civilization profoundly influenced the Indian in the matter of architecture, music, administration and of a new composite language which was originally the *patois* of the army camp but has become the *lingua franca* of India and bids fair to be the national language.

Moghul painting, literature, etc. are results of the interaction of Arabic and Indian cultures, but so far as Europe is concerned, there has been no similar osmosis on a large scale —the result of complete inhospitality on both sides. They

conquered us, but they were not conquered by us. Each exclusively and resentfully kept its culture free from merger. No phenomena parallel to the Greek and Roman occurred as a result of the French, Dutch and English invasions. They kept their soldiers and their cultures outside, separate. Such poems as were written by Indians were largely reminiscent of European poetry; similarly the paintings, however meritorious, were second-rate imitations of European masters, and it required strenuous efforts to minimize the assimilation of European art and ideals, and to bring into existence a few exemplars of Indian art. But in other respects, during 150 years of foreign rule, we have not produced, except in the case of Rabindranath Tagore and a few others, any great or original work. Not only in literature but also in painting, in sculpture, in architecture, we copied and copied, until we were in danger of artistic suicide, until the recent renaissance took place as a byproduct of political unrest.

And the consequences? Indians did not take steps to inculcate, to establish and to standardize the habit of scientific speculation, of experimentation. They did not produce scientific centres and research institutions on a large scale, with the result that we have to take steps today to emulate the West in its direct approach to Nature whether in the region of applied science or in that of mechanical invention and development. We have deliberately to bring these into existence, to copy at first and thereafter to evolve originality. We have to enter into that spirit of positive science, what might be called the spirit of quest and enquiry, by direct observation, direct contact with the facts and phenomena of the universe, as Raman and Bose have succeeded in doing. Thus alone shall we be able to integrate and establish a multiform culture.

There are many other directions in which we have to cull lessons from the rest of the world. In religious literature, Tamil and Sanskrit are perhaps the oldest in the world, and are still unsurpassed, but the arresting and realistic description of life and its phenomena, whether in novels,

romances, or books of descriptive history or biography, the whole world of what might be called objective international knowledge, has still to be explored by us. Shakespeare and Balzac, the continental dramatists and Voltaire and the great novelists, the humanitarian writers of the West, exemplify the work which has to be done by us and for us, and we cannot continue to be reading second-hand translations. We have to create a new literature of objectivity and description, of history and experimentation. That is a region in which we can be borrowers, wise borrowers, before we become lenders.

My purpose has been to indicate that, just as India has done a great deal to bring about unity and assimilation of cultures, there are many directions in which the influence of the world at large can impinge upon us, and we shall be short-sighted if we do not take advantage of the currents that approach us from outside. The world is maintained by currents of air, by ocean currents. If India is to become an effective factor in the world at large, she can play her part and play it most effectively by being both a lender and a borrower.

2. WORLD RELIGIONS

A STUDY IN SYNTHESIS

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः
श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां
तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥

Whoever desires to worship any particular form
His firm devotion shall I uphold

—*Bhagavadgita*

Religion was characterized by an acute, though somewhat cynical, thinker as a function of the land and the atmosphere. He meant thereby to suggest that the environment of each nation and race is as largely responsible for its spiritual outlook and development as it is understood by the theory of evolution to be in respect of its physical build and mental faculties. It has thus been asserted that the uncompromising rigidity and the so-called fatalism of Islam were largely conditioned by its birth amidst the deserts and the infrequent oases of Arabia, and no less a thinker than Arthur Avalon, dealing with the emergence of Sakti worship, has, after describing the *sal* forests that cover the slopes of the Himalayan hills and picturing the scene as "vast, secular and awe-inspiring", asserted that such a view displayed before the eyes of the incoming Aryan people "led to the intuition of the forest sages who realized that the Mother Power or Sakti, as will, thought and action, personalizes the life of this magnetic stretch of earth which is India".

However this may be, it is a remarkable fact that practically all the great religions and creative mystical thought of the world originated in the East, and the saying *Ex oriente lux: ex occidente lex* embodies a definite truth. The light of intuition

has been vouchsafed to the people of the East as continuously as the sense of law and administration has characterized many of the civilizations that have sprung up in the West.

The oldest creeds known to man have been connected directly or indirectly with Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean region. The civilizations of Crete, Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, China, Palestine, Arabia, Persia and India are all essentially Asian, and the traditions of ancient Egypt and even of Mexico and Peru are that the inspiration of their faiths came from Asian regions, as is evident from the community of basic conceptions and the representation of the divinities. The worship of such Hindu deities as Ganesa and Indra, the system of priesthood and the marriage and cremation customs in pristine America, the well-nigh universal serpent cult and the curious adoption of variants of the Sanskrit word *Ahi* (or snake) in Mexico and Egypt and many other features, seem to prove that there was a large Indian migration to the Far West as well as to the Far East. Arjuna, the Pandava hero, is, in fact, supposed to have married Ulupi, the daughter of a Ruler of *Patala* (or the Antipodes) a description of which land, rich in gold and unique in its features, is set out in the Puranas. It is remarkable that Montezuma, the Emperor of Mexico, informed the invader, Cortes, that his ancestors had migrated from the Orient.

The relativity of the Universe and the phenomena of worldly appearances, the seemingly inescapable duality involved in the problem of good and evil, the tremendous topics of sin and redemption from sin, the approach of man to the Supreme through the Son of God, or the Mother Goddess or Sakti, or through Intercessors, *Avatars* or other manifestations, or, again through Prophets or Apostles, priests or oracles, are characteristic practically of all religions, even though some creeds have originated in a breakaway from earlier traditions. It has further to be noted that in nearly every religion known to man, whether ostensibly dualistic or polytheistic or pantheistic, the ultimate truth, always conceded, may be expressed by the saying:

एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।

"The Supreme is one; learned men speak of it differently." As a resultant of speculation there may have arisen, as, for instance, in the Christian faith, the doctrines of Trinity, of unity in Trinity and of rigid Unitarianism; there has been propounded in Zoroastrianism the eternal riddle of Ahuramazda and his unceasing fight with Ahriman. The Bodhisatvas and Arhats of Buddhism and Jainism, the Virgin Mary and the canonized saints in the Catholic hagiology and the multiform Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon are evidences of a fundamental human tendency to revere different forms of Godhead; but immanent in all creeds is the ultimate truth, which is expressed most adequately and in imperishable verse in the following lines:

रूपं रूपविवर्जितस्य भवतो ध्यानेन यत्कल्पितं
स्तुत्यानिर्वचनीयताखिलगुरो दूरीकृता यन्मया ।
व्यापित्वञ्च निराकृतं भगवतो यत्तीर्थयात्रादिना
क्षन्तव्यं जगदीश तद्विकलतादोषत्रयं मत्कृतम् ॥

"O Lord, in my meditation I have attributed forms to Thee, Who art formless. O Thou Teacher of the world, in singing my hymns I have, as it were, belied the truth that Thou art indescribable. By going on pilgrimages I have, so to say, denied Thy omnipresence. O Lord of the Universe, pray forgive me for this three-fold fault."

This invocation brings home to us the eternal verity that it is by reason of the imperfections of human nature and the reactions of human emotions and aspirations, that man's spirit attributes forms to the formless, describes the indescribable, and seeks, in its very fervency of devotion, to confine within the limits of a temple or a church or a mosque the Omnipresent Soul of the World. If all of us realize the inner meaning of our rituals and observances, we shall witness less of that intolerance and that lack of mutual understanding which have, alas! made the history of religions to no small extent a chronicle of narrow-minded bigotry and persecution.

Just in the same way as a thread of unity runs through all the great and formative religions of the world, so likewise, to a careful observer will be apparent the unity that underlies even the careers, the achievements and the realizations of the chief Prophets and saints.

To mention the following names is to indicate the landmarks of human striving and human achievement in the domain of religion: Kung-futse or Confucius, Lao-tze, the Rshis who were the compilers of the Vedas and Upanishads, Sri Krishna, Zoroaster, the Buddha, Rshabha and Mahavira, Socrates, Jesus, Paul of Tarsus, Muhammad, and more recently in India, Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Kabir, Tukaram, Chaitanya, Guru Nanak, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Narayana Guru. Examining the lives of these originators of creeds, there are easily discernible divergences ranging from the non-esoteric and intensely practical outlook of Lao-tze to the subtle monistic doctrines of Sankara and the self-forgetful and all-absorbing Bhakti cult of Madhvacharya, the Alvars, Nayanars and Sri Ramakrishna. But the similarities are equally noticeable. Most of these teachers started with a practical knowledge of the world and its problems. Krishna passed through all the world's experiences, from a cowherd's life to that of a charioteer and of a reigning monarch. Some, like Confucius and Lao-tze and Zoroaster, were administrators; some, like the Lord Buddha, were born and bred in the atmosphere of a gorgeous court which they renounced. Muhammad carved his way to a throne. Others like Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, for a time, lived the life of a householder while being utterly detached in reality; and to others still, the problems of existence were revealed by intuition rather than by experience, as in the case of Jesus and Sankara. But every one of them was endowed with a sagacity and wisdom that comprehended the lures as well as the pitfalls that encompass our lives, and our possibilities as well as our frustrations. On the mind of each of them the problem of evil impinged itself. To each came the call, sooner or later, to renounce the outer world and its works. Almost every one of them passed

through a period of mortification of the flesh and asceticism of spirit. To all, practically without exception, came the great temptation in one form or another. Note, for instance, the temptation of Jesus by Satan and of the Buddha during his *tapas* by Mara and the powers of evil; they overcame the temptation to choose the easy path, and each emerged with mellow faith and with his special scheme of Salvation and was filled with the desire to spread the gospel which had been revealed to him. In performing this duty, some chose the form of abstract philosophy; some preferred ethical precept and laid emphasis on conduct rather than on doctrine; some evolved comprehensive and coherent philosophies like the authors of the Upanishads and Sri Krishna, Sankara and Ramanuja, Socrates and Plato; some spoke in parables like the Buddha and Jesus; some were law-givers like Moses and the Prophet Muhammad and Zoroaster. But all proclaimed the underlying faith that was in all of them—faith in the eternal existence of a Supreme Spirit, the dependence of the Universe on that Spirit and the need to conform to that way and that conduct which leads to the realization and fulfilment of man's destiny and the purpose of his life. None of them advocated the path of ignoble passivity, or mere acquiescence or one strewn with roses all the way. They knew instinctively that it is not temporary happiness nor worldly prosperity that can act on the heart of man, but, on the contrary, difficulty, abnegation and even martyrdom and death which are proved by history to be amongst the allurements that powerfully operate on the human soul. Carlyle deals with this phenomenon and says in his *Heroes and Hero-Worship*:

"Kindle the inner life of man and you have a flame that burns up all lower considerations. Not happiness, but something higher. One sees this even in the frivolous classes with their 'point of honour' and the like. Not by flattering; no, by awakening the heroic that slumbers in the heart does any religion gain true followers."

All the teachers, however, had their message interpreted by commentators and scholiasts who too often, in the manner of a

prism, broke up the white light of revelation into innumerable colours, depending upon individual, local or national idiosyncrasies, finally producing a medley of confusing flashes—some dazzling and some dim, but mostly obscuring the source of the light.

With only three notable exceptions, namely, ancient China, Rome under the Antonines and early India, religion and tolerance have rarely gone together, so much so that at present the followers of different creeds are assumed to be antagonists, overt or potential.

The analysis that is here attempted would be futile if it did not establish that, from the earliest stages of history up to the present moment, similar ideas and ideals have animated humanity in its search after perfection and that different cults and forms of worship have originated in differences of national and individual temperament and evolution. It was stated in one of the sacred books of Egypt that the soul, seeking the land of peace, meets the dwellers who, as stated in the *Papyri*, are people of all times and of all nations who have weighed their hearts against the feather of truth and gone into freedom through the open gateway of Tahuti. The Egyptian counterpart of Chitragupta is said to record the weighing of the heart by the assessors of the dead in the same way as judgment is given on the Day of Judgment according to the scriptures of the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims. One of the assessors asks the question of every soul: "Hast thou seen thy giant shadow upon the wall and thought thy semblance mighty?" and another asks: "Dost thou know that the end of one journey is but the beginning of another?" What intrinsic difference is there between this assessment and the vision that came to the Lord Buddha? Have not all human yearnings and prayers been equally addressed to that Being of whom, as our seers sang, the shadow is alike death and immortality?

यस्य छायामृतं यस्य मृत्युः ।

ZOROASTER

In the light of what has been stated above, let us examine

the life-history of the various apostles of humanity. Zoroaster, whose faith is now followed only by a small group of individuals, was one of the earliest of the holy messengers, barring the personages that gave their present shape to the Vedas and the Upanishads. He lived about the seventh century before Christ. There had been obviously a common religion among the Aryans of whom one branch was represented by India, and the other by Persia and Central Asia. That religion was of the Vedic type, involving a belief in Nature-Gods, especially Fire, Earth and Sky. The original identity of the two faiths is easily established by a comparison of a few key words. *Veda* in Sanskrit is *Vista* in the *Avesta*. *Gita* in Sanskrit was the Persian *Gatha* and the *Atharvan* was the priest, both in Sanskrit and Pehlevi. At some undetermined period, a cleavage arose between the two branches of the parent stock and resulted in an early religious schism, as a result of which the word *Asura*, used in the earlier portions of the Rgveda in the same good sense as *Ahura* in the *Zend-Avesta*, became identified in India with demons, whereas the Vedic *Deva* became the Zoroastrian "devil". The Persia of Zoroaster's days had become frankly degenerate and he, like most great Prophets, started his work by way of reaction against rites, ceremonies and magic.

Zoroaster or Spitama Zarathushtra, as his true name was, belonged either to Bactria or Western Persia, though his main task was performed not in his own homeland but elsewhere. The Buddha is an exile from India and Christ from Palestine. So was Zoroaster from his place of birth. Later on, he became the Adviser of the Persian Monarch, Vistasp, and it was with the full support of the State that he propagated his faith, which involved a high moral life and the doctrine of the God of Righteousness under whose banner the forces of evil had to be encountered. Personally, like Janaka the Rajarshi, he was an ascetic and mystic, but he fully perceived the danger of mystical studies unless they were properly regulated. He laid down that the object of mankind must be the welfare of mankind and he was opposed to the formation of a priesthood who would shut themselves off from their fellow-men. As

has been well stated by a student of the Zoroastrian faith, the prophet stressed that it is no use acquiring knowledge beyond the range of common humanity because such studies often make men forget humanity itself in the effort to escape from it. Living in the time of Darius, Zoroaster saw that the only possible scheme upon which a religion could be based at that juncture was one in which the broad principle of common good living stood foremost and where the good of all humanity was proclaimed as the good of each man's soul. In other words, he saw that religion is something which means, and will always mean, more to mankind than philosophy or mystic thought.

The two following passages from the *Avesta* are parallels of the Rgveda hymns to Agni and Varuna and arise from the same mental attitude and the same exaltation of fervour.

The *Gathas*, however, differ from early Hindu utterances in that they renounce the idea of man being a counterpart of the Divine. अयमात्मा ब्रह्म ("This Soul is Brahma") was the theme of the Rshis, but the Iranian seer deemed that the Perfect cannot have an imperfect counterpart.

The passages referred to above have been thus translated by Mr. Sohrab J. Bulsara:

He that first of all exerted Thought
And compounded Happiness
With centres of Light
Is indeed the creator of Righteous Order,
By means of his supreme Wisdom
By which wisdom is maintained therein,
The Highest Mind and Purest Love and Virtue.
These art Thou advancing by thy Holy spirit,
O Thou who art ever the same.

Yasna. xxxi. 7.

Indeed, my Lord!
I deem Thy Holy Fire as mighty
Owing to Righteousness
Which is manifested

In the order of the Universe,
Operating through it.

Yas. xxxiv. 4.

The so-called dualism of Zoroaster has been finely analysed by Prof. Wadia in his book on Zoroaster* and he has rightly pointed out that, if there is dualism in Zoroaster, it is only ethical dualism, drawing a contrast between good and evil. It was much later that the Prophet's teaching was modified into its present form. One feature, however, of this ancient faith is worthy of note, namely, that it postulates the idea of resurrection (as also do Christianity and Islam) and looks forward to the appearance of Saoshyant, who will complete the task begun by Zoroaster. In this the Avestan religion shares a belief common to it and to the Jews and to the Arabs—a belief which is allied to the idea of the Kalki Avatar of our Puranas, who will destroy the accumulated evils of this epoch and regenerate humanity. The fight against Angramainyu (Ahriman as ordinarily misnamed) is the perennial struggle against evil tendencies insisted on both in the original *Gathas* and their expansion which was Mithraism. This fight, wherein all physical evil was regarded as of paramount disciplinary value, was not more important to Zarathushtra than the inculcation of the doctrine of Universal Brotherhood and the repudiation of eternal bliss or eternal sorrow as the sole alternatives before humanity. Of Zoroaster Rabindranath Tagore has justly said that he was one of the earliest of men who gave a definitely moral character and direction to religion and, at the same time, preached the doctrine of essential monotheism which offered an eternal foundation of reality to goodness as an ideal. The faith of this Prophet in its later philosophical developments was followed in many countries, and in later times as the religion of Mithra, and is now recognized to be amongst the formative influences that must have operated on the faith and precepts of the Essenes and of Jesus Christ and St. Paul.

* *Zoroaster* by Prof. A. R. Wadia.

BUDDHA

Nearly five hundred millions of the human race live and die as disciples, to a larger or smaller degree, of the tenets of Gautama, and Hindu thought has been profoundly affected by his philosophy and his outlook on life's problems, so much so that he is acclaimed as one of the *Avatars* of Godhead, although Buddhism, like Jainism, has been subjected to persecution in the land of its birth. Though there are few professing Buddhists in India, the Buddha's life and his gospel are interwoven with the texture of Indian speculation. It is perhaps not too much to say that the lofty human personality of the Buddha, though imperfectly revealed, is the highest and the holiest in the history of thought. Let me quote a well-known passage from the writings of M. Barthelemy St. Hilaire: "His life has no speck or stain. His heroism equals his conviction. His personal example is irreproachable. He was the model of all the virtues that he preached. His abnegation, his charity and his unalterable sweetness never forsook him for a single moment. He silently prepared his doctrine during six years of retreat and meditation. He propagated it by the sole power of his speech and the persuasion offered by his own life. He united the serenity of a sage who knew the ways of life and who found the truth." His preaching started as a reaction against priesthood and multitudinous sacrifices and ritual and he never claimed divine powers. As too often happens, the world has given him fervent worship and has acclaimed him divine, and countless millions of lips daily repeat the formula "I take refuge in the Buddha". He who strove against obscurantism and blind faith and insisted on his own humanity is now the object of widespread adoration. He who based his revelation not on miracles but on reasoning is the subject of innumerable Jatakas, full of supernatural incidents. But such is the evolution of all heroes.

The Buddha was either a contemporary of Zoroaster or was born some time later. Zoroaster did not found his tenets on *Karma* or transmigration. The doctrine ot transmigration was, on the other hand, of the essence of Buddhism and the

Buddha bound up with it the indestructible element of faith in final good. Boundless love manifested in thought and action towards all entities, high and low, and the proud assertion of human freedom may be said to be the central points of his discourses.

In his remarkable poem, *The Light of Asia*, Sir Edwin Arnold has controverted the false theory that Buddhism is the apotheosis of nothingness, and these beautiful lines furnish a memorable epitome of his teachings:

If ye lay bound upon the wheel of change,
  And no way were of breaking from the chain,
The Heart of boundless Being is a curse,
  The Soul of Things fell Pain.
Ye are not bound! the Soul of Things is sweet,
  The Heart of Being is celestial rest;
Stronger than woe is will; that which was Good
  Doth pass to Better—Best.
I, Buddha, who wept with all my brothers' tears,
  Whose heart was broken by a whole world's woe,
Laugh and am glad, for there is Liberty!
  Ho! ye who suffer! know
Ye suffer from yourselves. None else compels,
  None other holds you that ye live and die,
And whirl upon the wheel, and hug and kiss
  Its spokes of agony.

* * *

Before beginning and without an end,
  As space eternal and as surety sure,
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,
  Only its laws endure.

* * *

It seeth everywhere and marketh all:
  Do right—it recompenseth! do one wrong—
The equal retribution must be made,
  Though Dharma tarry long.
Such is the Law which moves to righteousness,
  Which none at last can turn aside or stay;

The heart of it is Love, the end of it
Is Peace and Consummation sweet. Obey!

The early life, the *sanyasa* and the *tapas* of the Buddha and his conquest over evil have been so often described that it is needless to recapitulate what is universally known. But in the practicality and the simplicity of his doctrines which are based nevertheless on a profound philosophical grasp, his system must be accounted as one of the authentic shelters of the human spirit.

JESUS CHRIST

The history of Christ must be viewed against the background of his people and his times. It must take account of the Jewish hope of the coming of the Messiah both in the capacity of a temporal sovereign and as one who would establish a supernatural kingdom after the break-up of earthly empires. The Jews started with the assumption of a jealous and irascible tribal God, but Jesus expanded and sublimated that ideal. Although he was steeped in the writings of Elisha, who called down fire upon those who disobeyed his God, and of prophets like Amos and Jeremiah and Isiah, his conception was, in essence, different from theirs and was based on the fulfilment of the old scriptures by the triumph of God's chosen servant through suffering and patience and death, thus fulfilling God's purpose of redemption. It is now generally granted that the books on which Christianity depends are the result of slow compilation. It is admitted that the four Gospels are in some respects inconsistent with one another both as to facts and as to doctrines. But such things are of little account as the life and teachings of Jesus have a value far transcending such accidentals.

At the time of his birth, the background of Jewish life was complicated. The poor were practically excluded from temple services. Women suffered under civil and religious subordination. The Pharisees held to the law but in the language of a recent critic added to their doctrine a belief in a future state not found in the Pentateuch. The Sadducees

rejected this doctrine and preferred the pristine Mosaic system. Another sect comprised the Essenes, who were ascetics rejecting animal food and sacrificing wine, baths and rich clothing. In the language of Robertson, there then brooded over that part of the world an inherent pessimism and the mood of a downcast man wistful for a higher vision.

The Mithra cult, which was an offshoot of the Zoroastrian faith and which started with the worship of the Sun and Fire was widely prevalent in the Roman Empire and even in Palestine. Mithra therein appears as a mediator, redeemer and preserver. With the worship of Mithra was associated Sunday, which was called the Lord's Day. The present Christmas was one of the Mithraic festivals typifying the birth of the Sun-God. The Christian Easter was the period of Mithra's triumph and sacrifice. The Mithra faith observed the ritual sacrament of bread and water. It originated the sign of the Cross as the symbol of life and immortality. Mithra was also born of a Virgin Goddess. The doctrines of the Logos and of the Trinity were parts of this philosophy. So close were the similarities between earlier Christianity and Mithraism that some of the Christian Fathers of later years explained that the Devil had anticipated Christianity by imitating the future Christian mysteries in Mithraism.

Other prominent points of resemblance between Christianity and Mithraism are (1) the description of the mediator as "Son of God", and as deputy for the Father; (2) the triumphal procession; (3) the sacramental feast; (4) the death on the sacred tree; (5) the burial in a cave; (6) the resurrection; (7) the representation of the whole series of events as occupying one year; and (8) a sacrifice at or about the vernal equinox.

Later Biblical criticism and the works of Sir J. G. Frazer, Ernest Renan, Grant Allen, L. Powys, Sir Leslie Stephen and Yearsley have sought to point out that the incidents in Jesus' life, including the mystery of the Virgin birth, the massacre of the innocents and the story of the temptation, may be ascribed to various earlier sources, and it has been even argued

that the Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount are pre-Christian in origin, being derived from Babylonian prayers and from the Talmud respectively. It is superfluous to discuss such similarities ind etail or to follow with Sir James Frazer the evolution of the Adonis cult which he assimilates with the life of Jesus. Christianity was not perhaps the work of a single man. Jesus was, perchance unconsciously, affected by the pervasive influence of Greek thought. There was undoubtedly in him more than one element which, even without his suspecting it, came from Buddhism, the Persian faith or from Greek wisdom. To show, as critics have sought to show, that the religion founded by Jesus was derived from that which went before him only proves that it conformed to the instincts and wants of the human heart in a particular age. Jesus, doubtless, proceeded from the Jewish and the Mithra faith but, to quote from Renan, only in the same sense as Socrates proceeded from the school of the Sophists:

"A man is of his age and his race even when he reacts against that age and that race."

There is hardly need to shirk such issues. The accounts of Christ's birth from a Virgin Mother, for instance, are differently recorded in different Gospels, such as the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and they are paralleled by kindred stories regarding other heroes of antiquity. The earliest Gospel, in fact, makes no mention of the Virgin birth and it is true that the recorded teachings of St. Paul do not refer to it. The relationship of *guru* and *chela* between John the Baptist and Jesus and the latter's advance beyond the doctrines of his *guru*, the urge for retirement and communion with God, coupled with long periods of contemplation and fasting, seem, however, to be authentic incidents of his life as well as his unequivocal rejection of the facile temptations of material and spiritual aggrandisement and self-glorification. He generally refused to force man's allegiance or to rely upon the way of violence. His public career was swift and short. He had a period of popularity and expectant enthusiasm which was followed by a period of growing opposition.

The greatness of Jesus lay, however, in his bold and unflinching adherence to a religion of love and meekness that was radical, revolutionary and in truth communistic in outlook. It was a flaming indictment of all external manifestations and pharisaic practices. His message was definitely addressed and was specially soothing to the despised and the rejected amongst the people. He chose the publican and the sinner, and sympathy and forgiveness were the watchwords of his Gospel. Some of the recorded miracles of Jesus are difficult to comprehend like the blasting of the fig tree and the entry of the devils into the bodies of the Gadarene swine; but to discuss the authenticity of these miracles is profitless. Jesus doubtless possessed great powers and, like the prodigies performed by Indian Yogis, these exhibitions of the supranormal often baffle us. What were yesterday themes of ridicule and scepticism are commonplace facts of today. Telepathy, cure by faith and the slowly realized miracles of human personality bid us pause before giving way to scepticism or derision, but Jesus himself resolutely declined to show the Pharisees a sign from heaven that they might believe in him. "An evil generation seeketh after a sign; but there shall be no sign given it," he declared. Mr. Middleton Murry puts the case thus: "He had powers of healing which it might tax our modern medicine to explain, but his healings were not such as to impress the Pharisees with a sense of any definite power, nor would Jesus have had it otherwise." The modern mind sees evidence of Jesus' divinity, not in his miracles, but in the fragrance of his sacrificial living. As in the case of most prophets with the exceptions of the Buddha and Muhammad, his own relations disbelieved in him, and even his chosen Apostles were not consistent in their allegiance. His disciples, even when Jesus was at the climax of his life, hardly understood him. When he saw that the people at large were not ripe for his teaching, he chose the method of parables. Breaking away from the rigidity of Pharisaic teaching, he transformed the God of the Jews into a loving father and an intimate companion. Faced with rejection by his own people, he

evolved the idea of his messianic mission, namely, that he should suffer and die for his faith. It is seen that towards the end of his life he emphasized as the basis of all his teachings the two sayings:

> "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart and all thy soul and all thy mind and all thy strength" and
> "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The essential humanity of Jesus was perhaps most manifest when he, who was the son of Man as well as the son of God, showed that he was also subject to the physical limitations of the normal man. He expected supernatural intervention at the time of the Crucifixion and cried out in agony: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The Lord did not forsake him, but used his very agony as a revelation of human possibilities and obligations. His gift of himself was accepted and it was essentially voluntary and he was indicated as God's servant in a measure excelling the expectations of his disciples as a supernatural Messiah. It is needless to analyse the accounts of his burial and the resurrection. There are differences of opinion as to the occurrences, though many of the faithful profoundly believe in his bodily resurrection and regard it as fundamental to the traditional faith. But it will be remembered that St. Paul himself has emphasized that what rises is the spiritual body.

I have rarely read a more stimulating description of the meaning and significance of essential Christianity than in these words of Mr. George: *

"Christianity in its orthodox forms has been presented to the world as a creed, a system of beliefs, acceptance of which decides one's destiny in a future existence. But Christianity, as it was lived and taught by its founder, was essentially a way of life, a way of victorious living in this world, not by escaping and evading its sorrows and trials, but by overcoming them. It is the rediscovery of this radiant way of life that is needed by the times."

* *Jesus Christ* by S. K. George.

The faith that was in Jesus and the way of life already referred to partook essentially of the nature of Bhakti Yoga as understood and practised by the great Saiva and Vaishnava saints and hymnologists. The philosophical superstructure was added to Jesus' simple and trusting self-dedication by the next greatest personality in the history of Christianity, namely, St. Paul, who was trained in Greek philosophy but had also imbibed, though not completely, the spirit of Jesus. The corpus of Christian doctrine, before it was split up into innumerable sects, was essentially the creation of Paul. He was both a mystic and a man of the world as well as a powerful writer, and in the history of religion there are few passages to equal the summing up of fundamental human ideals contained in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 13:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up;

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

This is the real gospel of Christ and not the miscalled Christianity into which some nations have converted the simple Eastern faith. They have made of it a creed that has become a rod, in the language of Swinburne, a creed that has been subdivided into many warring sects and that in its practical application to life has, in many parts of the world,

failed to solve the problems of today—the problems of racial domination and superiority complexes, the mad quest for wealth and power and the subordination of the human soul to the demands of the transient as opposed to Christ's hunger and thirst for the life eternal.

MUHAMMAD

In his earlier years the Prophet was a business man and a participant in public affairs; and his marriage with Katija brought him worldly prosperity, continued felicity and peace of mind. In spite of his life in the midst of the world, however, he refused at all times to partake of the worship, sacrifices or celebrations offered to tribal divinities or images. To him unexpectedly came the call of the Unseen. He used often to retire to a cave called Hira, three miles away from Mecca, where he spent many hours in contemplation and prayers. He dreamed dreams foretelling impending events and, ultimately, a message was delivered to him by an angel who asked him to proclaim that "God is merciful ; He who taught man knowledge by pen; He who taught man what he did not know". The Prophet Muhammad was particularly fortunate in that his wife, whom he took into his confidence, and a holy man to whom he resorted, Varqa bin Naufal, supported him from the beginning and that Ali and Abu Baker were among the first batch of his converts. He speedily made converts, but very soon he also suffered persecution The trek out of Mecca and the migration to Medina along with a group of the faithful were landmarks in the progress of Islam. Conflicts arose with the Qureish tribe and then with the Jews. Finally peace was concluded as a result of negotiations, and free and friendly relations were established between Musalmans and non-Musalmans.

Muhammad lived in an atmosphere of outer conflict and war and he was a secular sovereign as well as a Prophet. For about fifteen years it is claimed that the various tenets of Islam were revealed through the instrumentality of angels and by direct revelation, and finally emerged in the following

five-fold doctrine: (1) the oneness of God and the revelation by God of His nature and attributes to man through a series of prophets culminating with Muhammad; (2) the necessity for prayer; (3) fasts; (4) alms-giving; and (5) pilgrimage to Mecca. Islam not only purports to regulate the relations of man with God, but recognizes no boundary line between this world and the next and concerns itself with all the details of daily life as the Hebrew scriptures and our Dharma Sastras also do. The religion of the Prophet is uniquely simple, direct and comprehensive. There are many misconceptions regarding the Quranic teaching, and the world is, for instance, apt to forget that the rights and privileges of women were enhanced and vindicated rather than suppressed or ignored by the laws of Muhammad. It was he that recognized, as a matter of religious principle, the right of woman to inherit and own property in her own name. There is a further misapprehension that the Quran preaches intolerance and conversion by means of the sword. Such a doctrine cannot be legitimately ascribed to a gospel which asserts that there is no compulsion in religion. The Quran is full of statements showing that belief in this or that religion is a person's own concern. The Quran allows fighting only to save a persecuted community from oppressors and the condition is laid down that fighting is to be stopped as soon as that persecution ceases. The polygamy allowed in Islam is subject to certain conditions, and was in itself a great advance on previous practices; and the Quran never prohibited women from going out of their houses and joining in the labours of the field or even the camp, and no occupation was barred to them. The present *purdah* system is an apparently unauthorized development of the precept that women should cast down their looks and guard their bodies and not display their ornaments and that they should wear their head-coverings so as not to display their bosoms.

The simplicity and directness of Islamic teaching enabled it to be easily comprehended by every class and grade of society, and the world cannot be sufficiently grateful to a

Prophet whose teachings have helped to eliminate, to a large extent, those arbitrary differences of nationality and colour which have been the sources of so much evil. It is the glory of Islam that, in practice as well as in theory, tolerates no distinction between the white man and the black, between one race, and another, and between the dwellers in various climes. The oneness of God and the essential oneness of humanity and the possibility of attainment of salvation by rigid adherence to a few plain truths and to the practice of restraint and benevolence were never more consistently and more successfully preached and broadcast than by this Prophet and Messenger of God—*Nabi* and *Rasulallah*. Sects and sub-sects developed within this framework and the Sufis engrafted an attractive and carefully reasoned variant of the Vedantic doctrine on the original stock. But the religion of the Arab Prophet is perhaps the one that has most carefully maintained its original lineaments and form and that is still offering daily succour and consolation to men of the most varying types of culture and civilization.

SRI KRISHNA

It is necessary to distinguish between the inner core of Sri Krishna's life and the accretions that have gathered around the original story. One has to jump over many fences in trying to explain the chronicles of the Gopis and the exploits ascribed to one who is regarded as a *Purnavatara*. The Mahabharata is silent on the theme of the Gopis, and it is only from the time of the *Harivamsa* that we have so many full descriptions of, and so much emphasis on, the physical aspects of Sri Krishna's sportiveness and his relations with the milk-maids. It may be pointed out especially that even in the *Sabha Parva*, in the midst of Sisupala's string of abuses levelled at Krishna, there is no mention of the Gopi episodes. It is also worthy of remark that the killing of Kamsa is placed in the eleventh or twelfth year of Krishna's life and that, from the historical point of view, Krishna spent only his childhood in Brindavana. This is also borne out by another circumstance,

namely, that Krishna's education under Sandipani began after the death of Kamsa. Miracles and supernormal manifestations are associated sooner or later with the life of all the world's heroes, whether they be religious or even secular. The Buddha, Christ, Muhammad and Sankara and even later devotees like Nanda and Tyagaraja have this halo around them. It is no wonder, therefore, that so many miraculous happenings cluster round the careers of Rama and Krishna. Dealing with the Gopi story, it cannot be forgotten that, throughout the literatures of the world, the love of man for his *Ishta Devata* is likened to the love of a woman towards her lover, and the bliss of communion is likened to the joy of physical union. The Biblical *Song of Songs*, the saying of Jesus Christ likening God to the bridegroom and the souls to virgins waiting for their spouse, the recorded experiences of medieval Christian saints like St. Theresa and St. Gertrude who recounted the caresses bestowed upon them by Christ, the assertion of St. Catherine that she was betrothed to Christ and was given a ring by him, are all analogous. The Gopi episodes may best be regarded as symbolic of ideal devotion. Swami Vivekananda, dealing with this aspect of Sri Krishna's life, has dealt with it as the delineation of a love that is supreme and that does not care for anything in this world or the world to come. The *lilas* in Brindavana may be, and have been, interpreted as an allegory of religious experience. In dealing with the story of the hiding of the clothes of the milk-maids, one may quote Sadhu Vaswani's remarks that the critics forget that the incident relates to a time when Sri Krishna was less than ten years old. Some have expounded this incident as the approach of the individual soul naked before its Maker—without the *vastra* or the external accompaniment under whose burden our life is stifled. One may also cite in connexion with this episode what is said of Jesus on one occasion, namely, that in answer to a question by his disciples, "When wilt Thou be manifest to us ?" he replied, "When you shall be stripped and not be ashamed." But all these anecdotes and narratives, whether

true or allegorical, are really beside the point. Sri Krishna is to us the greatest spiritual inheritor of the Upanishads, and his teachings through the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Anugita* and the *Uddhavagita*, embody the essence of the Indian teaching about the duties of life and the obligations of the human soul in response to the impact of the seen and unseen worlds. Everyone has his several and allotted duties. Sin arises not from the nature of the work but from the disposition with which that work is performed. When such work is performed without attachment to results, it cannot tarnish the soul and cannot impede its quest. True Yoga consists in the laborious and necessary acquisition of experience and knowledge and the passage through life in harmony with the ultimate laws of equanimity, of non-attachment to the fruits of action and of faith in the pervasiveness of the Supreme Spirit. Absorption with that spirit is possible of attainment along several paths, and no path is exclusively to be preferred and none is to be disdained. Sri Krishna's doctrines have also been described as embodying a protestant movement laying stress on the personality of God and his accessibility to devotion. Whilst following the Hindu ideal of the Asramas, the *Gita* stresses the importance of knowledge, charity, penance and worship and does not decry life as evil :

> न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्माण्यशेषतः।
> यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते॥

"Nor indeed can embodied beings completely relinquish action; verily, he who relinquisheth the fruit of action, he is said to be a true relinquisher."

> नियतं सङ्गरहितमरागद्वेषतः कृतम्।
> अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यत्तत्सात्विकमुच्यते॥

"An action which is performed by one undesirous of fruit, devoid of attachment, without love or hate, that is called pure."

> मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु।
> मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे॥

> "Merge thy mind in Me, be My devotee, sacrifice thyself to Me, worship Me, and thou shalt come even to Me. I pledge thee My troth, thou art dear to Me."

These three verses may be said to be the concentrated essence of the teachings which are a logical sequence of our ancient scriptures and an indispensable process in that evolution of thought which began with the Vedas and was continued in the Upanishads. The knowledge of the self, the identification of that self with the Supreme Self and the processes by which such identification can be implemented are all essential components of every variety of the Hindu solution of the riddle of the world. Yagnavalkya, desiring to bestow his properties on his wives, is asked by one of them, Maitreyi, "If the whole world with all its wealth be mine, could I become immortal ?" The answer was, and cannot but be, "Dear one, the life of the wealthy thy life might become; by wealth, however, there is no hope of (obtaining) immortality." Then came the great teaching of the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad which is summarized in the second chapter of the fourth *Brahmana* (fifth verse) :

> स होवाच न वा अरे पत्युः कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति; न वा अरे जायायै कामाय जाया प्रिया भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति; ..न वा अरे ब्रह्मणः कामाय ब्रह्म प्रियं भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय ब्रह्म प्रियं भवति...... ।

I freely translate :

> Behold, not indeed for the husband's sake the husband is dear, but for the sake of the self is dear the husband. Behold, not indeed for the wife's sake the wife is dear, but for the sake of the self is dear the wife. Behold, not for the Brahman's sake the Brahman is dear, but for the sake of the self is the Brahman dear." The Upanishad goes on to declare: "Behold, not for the gods' sake the gods are dear, but for the sake of the self are dear the gods. Behold, not for the Vedas' sake the Vedas are dear, but for the sake of the self are

> dear the Vedas. Behold, not for the sake of the universe the universe is dear, but for the sake of the self is dear the universe. Behold, the self *(Atman)* is verily to be seen, heard, minded (and) meditated upon. Behold, O Maitreyi, by seeing, hearing, minding, knowing the self, all this (universe) is comprehended."

The teachings of the *Gita* are seen to be a restatement and an amplification of the truths which have been the special heritage of our race.

The main characteristic of Hinduism may be said to consist in its continuity, its ordered evolution, its adaptability and its tolerance. Hinduism, in its varied aspects, recognizes the inevitable varieties of human life and human experience, the needs of individuals in several stages of evolution and the natural reactions to life and destiny of persons in several stations. No religion makes so many allowances for environment and heredity and for the too frequent fallings away from the ideal. While rigidly adhering to the fundamental postulates of an all-embracing Dharma and of an inflexible doctrine of Karma, it does not rely on any formal revelation as such for its validity. Miracles have been recorded in the sacred books, but no miracle is an essential part of its tenets and belief in miracles is not a condition precedent to salvation. It preaches that good and evil actions leave their inevitable traces on human life.

The root theory of Karma has been felicitously adumbrated in a Buddhist scripture, and the Buddha and Krishna are truly kindred spirits and are united in their emphasis on Karma, and reincarnation and Dharma.

> "The books say well, my Brothers ! each man's life
> The outcome of his former living is;
> The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrows and woes,
> The bygone right breeds bliss.
> He cometh, reaper of the things he sowed,
> Sesamum, corn, so much cast in past birth;
> And so much weed and poison-stuff, which mar
> Him and the aching earth.

If he shall labour rightly, rooting these,
And planting wholesome seedlings where they grew,
Fruitful and fair and clean the ground shall be,
And rich the harvest due."

Such a faith if rightly appreciated cannot but lead to tolerance and understanding of all points of view, and tolerance has been, in the main, the key-note of Indian history. A better example of wide comprehension and toleration cannot be given than the prayer in the play *Hanuman-nataka* set out below, wherein Saivites, Vedantins, Buddhists, Jainas and agnostics are regarded as following paths that must lead to the same goal:

यं शैवास्समुपासते शिव इति ब्रह्मेति वेदान्तिनो
बौद्धा बुद्ध इति प्रमाणपटवः कर्तेति नैयायिकाः ।
अर्हन्नित्यथ जैनशासनरताः कर्मेति मीमांसकाः
सोऽयं वो विदधातु वाञ्छितफलं त्रैलोक्यनाथो हरिः ॥

"May Hari, the remover of sin, the Lord of the Universe, whom the Saivas worship as Siva, the Vedantins as Brahman, the Buddhists as Buddha, the Naiyayikas clever in logic as the Agent, the followers of the Jaina doctrine as Arhat, the Mimamsakas as Karma—grant you the boon of boons!"

SANKARACHARYA

Sankaracharya is the protagonist of Advaita Vedanta. The entire universe consisting of *Nama-rupa* or "names and forms" is but an appearance, and Brahman or Infinite Consciousness is the sole reality. Its attainment and the annihilation of the great Illusion of the Universe called *Maya* by a process of realization were the objects of Sankara's quest. Sankara's life-story is a short one. He was a Nambudiri Brahman born in Travancore, who early became a *sanyasin*, studied under Govinda, defeated Buddhists and other sectaries in disputation and established *mutts* or centres of religious learning and practices in the north, south, east and west of India. Srinagar, Dwaraka, Puri, Sringeri and Kanchi were his far-flung spiritual

capitals. A number of legends and miracles have been associated with his life; but one need not deal in detail with such occurrences as that he obtained the consent of his mother to assume the *Sanyasasrama* on the pretext that he had been caught in the bathing ghat by a crocodile and that he had saved himself after resolving upon what is called *Apatsanyasa*. The account of the funeral ceremonies of his mother is probably apocryphal. The real miracle was his life itself. In about thirty-two years he is reported to have travelled throughout India, established and vindicated the Vedanta doctrine and made it a part and parcel of Hindu psychology. He left the impress of his genius and of his marvellously analytical intellect and his capacity for devotion on a whole sub-continent without any adventitious aids of secular power or even of large masses of adherents. It may also be remembered that Sankara was not only the preacher of the unalloyed doctrines of the Vedanta but a poet of rare distinction whose luscious imagery and whose descriptions of nature and of man's and woman's life and thoughts argued an unparalled intuition. He was a great Bhakta as well as a Gnana Yogi. His devotion was many-sided but all-absorbing and yet no one has been more devastatingly critical of pretentiousness and humbug and foolish faith than Sankara himself. In one of his songs to Siva, he prays that he may be saved from the fate of becoming a Purohit, from leading a disreputable night life, from being a local leader, from being a Mathadhipati or pontiff, from being a witness in a court of law, from being a liar and, above all, from being arrogant or lacking in the quality of mercy:

पौरोहित्यं रजनिचरितं ग्रामणीत्वं नियोगो
माठापत्यं ह्यनृतवचनं साक्षिवादः परान्नम् ।
ब्रह्मद्वेषः खलजनरतिः प्राणिनां निर्दयत्वं
मा भूदेवं मम पशुपते! जन्मजन्मान्तरेषु ॥

The synthesis of all forms of belief and the perception of oneness have never perhaps been more perfectly expressed than in the following stanza included in Sankara's wonderful outpouring—the *Dakshinamurti Stotra*:

मूरम्भास्यनलोऽनिलोऽम्बरमहर्नाथो हिमांशुः पुमा-
नित्याभाति चराचरात्मकमिदं यस्यैव मूर्त्यष्टकम् ।
नान्यत्किञ्चन विद्यते विमृशतां यस्मात्परस्माद्विभो-
स्तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

"To Him whose eightfold body is all this moving and fixed universe, appearing as earth, water, fire, air, ether, the sun, the moon and soul; beyond Whom, supreme and all-pervading, there exists nothing else for those who carefully investigate; to Him who is incarnate in the Teacher, to Him in the Effulgent Form Facing the South, to Him (Siva) be this obeisance."

It is an amazing psychological phenomenon that the author of the *Dakshinamurti Stotra* and the commentaries on the Vedanta Sutras could also be responsible for the intimate devotional thrill and the rapt ecstasy that characterize his *Ananda Lahari* and the verses beginning with भज गोविन्दं as well as stanzas like the following :

जपो जल्पः शिल्पं सकलमपि मुद्राविरचना
गतिः प्रादक्षिण्यक्रमणमशनाद्याहुतविधिः ।
प्रणामः संवेशः सुखमखिलमात्मार्पणदृशा
सपर्यापर्यायस्तव भवतु यन्मे विलसितम् ॥

"(O Mother !) Whatever I articulate, may that be regarded as a prayer; may all my manual skill be the gestures of Your worship; may my walks be my circumambulations round You, may my daily food be sacrifice to You, my lying down, obeisance to You, may all enjoyment be an offering and dedication of myself; whatever act I perform, may that be Your worship."

(Saundarya Lahari)

It was the same seer that thus epitomized the Vedanta doctrine in his "Century of Verses" (शतश्लोकी) :

जीवात्मब्रह्मभेदं दलयति सहसा यत्प्रकाशैकरूपं ।
माया तेनैव तस्य क्षयमुपगमिता संसृतेः कारणं या ॥

> "Such a resplendent realization at once destroys the distinction between the individual soul and the Supreme Self. The illusion (*Maya*) that is the source of birth and death is destroyed by that realization."

His main contribution to thought is his inflexible and rarefied philosophy, blended of the doctrines of Karma and *Maya*, culminating in a logical exposition of the philosophy of non-dualism. He took the Upanishads, the Gita and the Vedanta Sutras and interpreted these scriptures so as to sustain his thesis with wonderful clarity and depth of exposition. He was a great disputant but he was also very catholic in outlook, although he tolerated no paltering with what he regarded as basic. He remoulded Indian thought and evolved the theory of Brahman and Atman in a specially individual manner. With a capacity for deep feeling and emotional expression, Sankara united a remorseless logic and destroyed many dogmas. He revivified the Upanishads and, in the language of Dr. Radhakrishnan, he was not merely a dreaming idealist but a practical visionary. Very different in outlook were the Vaishnava Alvars and the Saiva singers Sundaramurti, Gnanasambandhar and Manikkavachakar; different too were the musings of the Virasaiva Saint Basava who sang, in his *Vachanas*, of Siva in certain of His aspects; also different was the appeal of the *Gnanavasishtham*, which is one of the sources of religious inspiration in the south of India. Ramanuja, the great apostle of Visishtadvaita, and Madhva and Vallabha, the Dvaitas, took their stand alike on the Upanishads, and this, in truth, is one of the features of Indian thought, namely, that the ultimate source of inspiration is regarded as one although the truth may be variously interpreted and commented upon and may be applied differently to the daily life of men in different strata of society. It is, for instance, stated in a Tamil hymn: "Like song and its tune, like fruit and its flower, the Lord's energy everywhere pervadeth, non-dual." Say the great Vedas, not "One" but "Not-two".

यन्नेति नेति वचनैर्निगमा अवोचन exclaims Sankara in one

of his hymns. The Supreme can only be described as "Not this", " Not that".

INDIA AND RELIGION

To a philosophy and a system so all-embracing as the Indian, the actual form under which the Deity is contemplated matters little. The time, the occasion, the needs of the soul and the special evolution of personality—each of these calls forth a prayer to Siva or Vishnu or the Devi, or other aspect of the Ultimate. Each soul, each mood of that soul, each moment of the life of that soul, may need a different solace and a different message. Thus, for instance, Tayumanavar exclaims:

"Mansion and wealth, children and friends around,
Splendour ever and throne, the certainty
That Death's dark messengers draw not nigh,
Wisdom's light, purity, wondrous powers,
All these are mine, so with Thy feet
My thought be one, O Mother that hast
Thy seat beside the dark-throated Lord!
Light and Bliss of Knowledge Supreme, that
Swallowest religions as ocean, rivers,
O Stillness, the Vedas' goal,
Thy form seen where music ends!
O Wisdom, consumer of me and thought!"

There is no inconsistency in the Hindu mind between the monotheism of Muhammad, the apparent dualism of Zoroaster, the Christian developments of the doctrine of Trinity—a variant of the Trimurti of the Hindus—or the pantheism that thinks of nature and all its manifestations as an emanation from Godhead. The general character of Indian civilization is said to be dependent on its metaphysical attitude, but it is absurd to talk, as Sir John Woodroffe indignantly exclaims, as though India produced nothing but Yogis and philosophers. Let me quote a memorable passage from Avalon's *Shakti and Shakta*:

"The life of India has displayed itself in all activities. It has meditated both as the man of religion and of philosophy

but it has also worked in every sphere of activity. There have been the splendid courts of great Kingdoms and Empires, skilful administration *(Rajadharma)*, practical autonomies of village and communal life *(Prajadharma)*, prowess in war and in the chase, scientific works, a world-commerce and prosperous agriculture, a monumental and sumptuous art (where can we find stronger and more brilliant colour?) and a life of poetry, emotion, and passion, both written and lived. It is significant of the variety of India's life that the same land of ascetic austerity produced the *Kama Shastra* (Erotic Scriptures) and kindred literature and art."

Whether India worships one form or another of divinity or adopts one philosophy or another of life, those who merely talk of the differences have not seen beyond the surface of things. "Service of the Mother-form in any of her aspects," to quote again from Avalon's *Shakti and Shakta*, "is as much worship as are the traditional forms of Karma Yoga, or Gnana Yoga or ritual Upasanas. Service of that Mother-form or Shakti which is typified by India is also an aspect of religion which is called true patriotism and which is one and not in conflict with that which is higher than patriotism, namely, humanity." And so, comprehending the unity and harmony of all the quests on which the human soul has been bent, understanding that the great prophets and seers have all seen the truth, though in different forms and in different moods, let us, in the rebuilding of India, make our own new contribution not by way of imitation, but as a synthesis of our own past spiritual civilization, not excluding the adoption of what others hold or do and what other faiths have to give us, and what other creeds have to teach us, provided always that such adoption is made part of our own nature.

I firmly believe that the world needs education, not in the outer manifestations but in the inner significance of the Hindu ideals. Such an education must comprise the active cultivation of *Abhaya* or freedom from fear and not the acceptance of any particular creed or rite. अभयं हि वै ब्रह्म ("Brahman is fearlessness"). So proclaim our scriptures. Such training involves

freedom from all illusions and inferiority-complexes and the assertion of human personality as a part of the supreme scheme. As Dr. Radhakrishnan has wisely remarked, *Abhaya* and *Ahimsa*, awareness and sympathy, freedom and love, are the features that most need emphasis today, when, in spite of scientific progress, material wealth and intellectual advancement, our sense of frustration is so pervasive. Hindu and Buddhist thinkers ascribe this phenomenon to *Avidya* or ignorance, out of which arise continuous wars and abiding fear. As in India, so in other countries, the same underlying truths have been perceived by many prophets and seekers after truth, but the special preoccupation of Hindu thought and philosophy has been a conscious adjustment of the claims and potentialities of the body and the mind to those of the soul, the recognition of and allowance for worldly activity and even the pursuit of the ambitions and pleasures and relaxations of life. Hinduism may well be conceived as a reconciliation of bodily regimen with mental discipline and spiritual evolution, designed to produce an intrinsic and essential harmony within the microcosm of human personality whose objective is to reach and be absorbed in the macrocosm which is Brahman or the Oversoul.

By way of conclusion and as a summing-up of the study that has been attempted in the previous pages, one cannot do better than cite an extract from Sri Aurobindo Ghose's little treatise *Yoga and its Objects*:

> "Remember that one-sided philosophies are always a partial statement of truth. The world, as God has made it, is not a rigid exercise in logic but like a strain of music, an infinite harmony of many diversities and its own existence, being free and absolute, cannot be logically defined. Just as the best religion is that which admits the truth of all religions, so the best philosophy is that which admits the truth of all philosophies and gives each its right place."

3. AN ANTHOLOGY OF INDIAN CULTURE*

If the aim of culture is to persuade us to ascertain what perfection is and to make it prevail, and if this can best be done, in the expressive language of Matthew Arnold, "by acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world, that is, with the history of the human spirit", then surely, a chronicle of the development of that spirit in this country is worth attempting. Culture has a universal as well as a particular aspect. There is a fraternity of ultimate excellence which equates all the archetypes of perfection, separated though they may be by space or time. At the same time, things that are excellent in the sphere of the mind and spirit are, of necessity, racy and partake of the nature of their soil. Indian culture, in so far as it represents a way of life or of self-expression, must, like a great tree, be rooted in the soil although it soars to the sky. It involves contacts with life both in the rough and the smooth, and to the extent to which it bases itself on aloofness from the yearnings and struggles and the tragi-comedies of existence, it fails of its purpose. It was not for nothing that Emerson declared that genius is a larger comprehension of the common heart. He also described Asia as the country of unity and of immovable institutions, and as the seat of a philosophy delighting in abstractions. On the other side, he depicted the philosophy of Europe as a discipline. If the East loved infinity, he added, the West delighted in boundaries. It is worth while considering how the progress of our culture justifies such an evaluation. In his essay on the "Study of Poetry", Matthew Arnold declared: " Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other

* Contributed to *India Speaks*.

poetry." I shall attempt a similar task within the limits of a brief essay. My purpose is to draw a contour map, as it were, of our cultural heritage that will enable the traveller by land or air to locate his whereabouts.

Reflecting on the expression "Indian Culture", what are the ideas that pass through men's minds? To some it is synonymous with certain religious or philosophic beliefs that have been associated with India—beliefs like the doctrines of Maya or Karma, the immanent sense of the eternal or of the unity of creation that follows from an acceptance of the doctrine of transmigration. To others, it is associated with the dreams and ideals embodied in ineffable monolithic architecture, rock-cut caves and carved pillars and roofs, as well as in the *gopurams* of the South aspiring to the sky and embellished with noble as well as grotesque shapes and forms, some lovely, some terrible or even trivial, but all infinitely expressive. Others again would point to symbolic representations of thought-forms and personified allegories like the concepts of Nataraja dancing the cosmic dance, of Krishna, as the protector of his flock, capturing the souls of his devotees with the music of his flute or functioning as the charioteer of the human soul, and of entrancing images like the Eternal Virgin Kanyakumari contemplating upon and waiting for union with her Lord. By some, Indian music, as the expression of the relations between the human and cosmic orders, may be regarded as the aptest expression of the Indian spirit, characterized by its intrinsic subtlety, its improvisation, its minute sub-divisions of rhythm and time which nevertheless combine in flawless melody. Those who take a bird's-eye view of Indian culture as a whole, including all these manifestations as well as the sacred and secular literature of the country, will surely discern certain uniform aspects common to these various manifestations of the Indian soul. What, if any, is the common thread that runs through all these forms wherein and whereby the Indian mind and spirit demonstrate themselves?

It is always true, as Goethe observed in his "Elective Affinities", that "we escape the world through art", but he was

careful to add that art is also our link with it. The close interaction of art and life is an essential requisite of all vital culture. Sir Richard Livingstone referred admirably to this aspect of the matter when he spoke of the "cross-fertilization of literature and life". Religion has always been to the Indian not so much a dogma as a state of being, an essential phase of life. In this country the boundaries between the human and the divine were not rigidly established; they passed imperceptibly from one to the other. Not only man, but Nature too is believed to have its region in the spirit, and it is regarded as man's highest duty to realize this communion. If, therefore, we regard our culture, not as the embodiment of a dead or half-alive creed, but as the cradle of an ever-expanding faith, there should be a revival amongst us of the truth that was exquisitely rendered in song by Robert Bridges:

"Truth is as Beauty unconfined;
Various as Nature is man's mind:
Each race and tribe is as a flower
Set in God's garden with its dower
Of special instinct; and man's grace,
Compact of all, must all embrace.
China and Ind, Hellas or France,
Each has its own inheritance;
And each to Truth's rich market brings
Its bright divine imaginings,
In rival tribute to surprise
The world with native merchandise."

In writing of Indian culture, one logically begins with the Vedas, the outpourings of a young, adventurous and joyous race that gloried in strength and splendour and was not afflicted with pessimism or the malaise of a sophisticated era. The Gods are greeted like parents or elder brothers to whom in simple and unaffected language frank requests are addressed:

भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।
स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवांसस्तनूभिः व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ॥

"O Gods! may we hear with our ears words that are auspicious; O Gods, worthy of our offerings, may we

see with our eyes sights that are auspicious; with firm limbs and bodies, and singing your praises, may we attain the God-given length of life."

The description of a righteous man is typical:

मधु वाता ऋतायते
मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः ।

"Sweet do the winds blow unto him who desires to abide by the Moral Law; sweet do the streams flow for him."

Right through the early period, the 'worthwhileness' and the validity of life are the recurrent themes. It is, however, characteristic of India that as a parallel development, and even from the earliest days, there was also manifested a clear-eyed and daring spirit of enquiry which frankly accepted the essential mystery underlying the Universe. In the Rgveda occur these remarkable lines:

यस्य छायामृतं यस्य मृत्युः
कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ।

"He whose shadow is immortality as well as death, that unknown divinity, who is the Supreme, let us worship."

The earliest instances of Indian speculation and Indian poetry therefore bring before us a people who were impressed by the majesty and the terrific powers of nature, but who, without being cowed thereby, were able to confront the world and the Oversoul without any craven fears or that self-abasement which began to characterize their descendants in the days of their decline. The pervasiveness of the Supreme Spirit and the baffling mystery surrounding it were always present to the Indian thinker. In the Atharva Veda occurs this sentiment:

यस्तिष्ठति चरति यश्च वञ्चति यो निलायं चरति यः प्रतङ्कम् ।
द्वौ संनिषद्य यन्मन्त्रयेते राजा तद्वेद वरुणः तृतीयः ॥

"Whoever stands or moves, whoever walks through crooked, secret paths, or whoever lives desperately and also whenever two persons join together to

conspire, let all these know that the great King Varuna is also present by their side as the third, and knows all."

Max Muller has acutely utilized the expression "henotheism" to depict the religious attitude of enlightened India. It is intrinsically different from the other word "pantheism" and denotes a belief in one God, who is, however, not regarded as the only divine entity. Such an outlook is perceived in the words:

एकं सद्विप्रा: बहुधा वदन्ति ।

"The One that exists is described variously by learned men."

This view-point is apparent throughout the course of Indian history. The sculptor, the poet, the musician and the philosopher exalt each manifestation or incarnation to the highest place with the sub-consciousness that beneath this diversity there is a fundamental oneness.

Sankara, the most uncompromising preacher of *Advaita* or non-duality, is at the same time the author of touching devotional hymns to the Devi and to various manifestations or incarnations of Siva and Vishnu, to Dakshinamurti, to Subramanya and Ganesa. In his hymn to Dakshinamurti, he refers to Godhead in relation to natural phenomena.

Kabir, Chaitanya and most of our *catena* of singers have followed this path which Tagore also trod with consummate skill in many of his songs and his *Sadhana*. Sri Aurobindo belongs to the same tradition.

Soon, however, by the impact of circumstances and also by a natural reaction, the Aryan mind shed some of its *joie de vivre* and became intensely introspective and in a sense more sombre. A profound psychological revolt against formality and ceremonialism was initiated by the Lord Buddha. This rebellion was, however, external and not in truth a breaking away from fundamentals. It was like the pruning of decayed branches. Its first reactions were against the facile acceptance of ceremonialism. The Buddha averred:

"Seek nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruits and cakes;

Within yourselves deliverance must be sought;
Each man his prison makes."

His ultimate gospel, which was continued and developed in the message of the Upanishads, was thus outlined (I quote from *The Light of Asia*):

"Such is the Law which moves to righteousness,
Which none at last can turn aside or stay;
The heart of it is Love, the end of it
Is Peace and Consummation sweet. Obey !"

The great and original contribution of the Buddha not only to Indian culture but to world-thought, however, was his great affirmation that his disciples should not believe in anything on mere hearsay. "Whatsoever", he declared to his followers, "after thorough investigation and reflection is found to agree with reason and experience as conducive to the good and the benefit of one and all, that alone accept as truth and shape your life in accordance therewith. You must labour for yourselves. The Buddhas are only teachers, the showers of the path." This insistence on investigation, common to most Indian thinkers, is re-emphasized by Sankara:

नोत्पद्यते विना ज्ञानं
विचारेणान्यसाधनैः ।

"Knowledge cannot be attained by any means other than enquiry."

Only those who are superficial onlookers fail to perceive that the Indian mind was never the slave of dogma. When crudity and unthinking superstition appeared on the scene, the seeds of decay had already been sown.

Contemporaneously with the Lord Buddha and during the many centuries that followed him the commentators on the Upanishads, with the double background of the Vedic faith and the developing metaphysics, evolved a complete philosophy of life, which may be regarded in conjunction with the doctrines of the Gita as a definitive component of Indian culture. The statement of the Chhandogya Upanishad तत्त्वमसि ("That thou art") and the realization embodied in the Brihadaranyaka

Upanishad, अहं ब्रह्मास्मि ("I am Brahman") placed in juxtaposition with the declaration नेति नेति ("Not this, not this"), and taken together with the other illuminating dictum, अस्तीति ब्रुवतोऽन्यत्र कथं तदुपलभ्यते ("Save through the assertion that it exists how shall one perceive the Supreme Spirit ?") embody the humility of the seeker after truth in face of the Eternal, which can only be described by negatives and cannot be fully envisaged owing to the inevitable limitations of the human intellect. They also proudly affirm the unity of the human spirit with the cosmic consciousness and they constantly recur to this thesis :

मनसैवानुद्रष्टव्यं
नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन ।

> "The mind must perceive that there can be no separateness in the world."

The logical consummation of this way of thinking is to be found in Sankara's Advaita (or non-dual) philosophy whose awe-inspiring central doctrine is thus epitomized:

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या
जीवो ब्रह्मैवनापरः ।

> "The Oversoul is the one eternal verity. Man's spirit is part of it and not different. The rest is illusion."

The final injunction, अभयं वै ब्रह्माभयं हि ब्रह्माभवति य एवं वेद, "Fearlessness is Brahma and he who is fearless realizes the Supreme" may be said to be the watchword and the beacon of Indian art and Indian philosophy during the centuries when alone India truly lived. Another saying is specially apposite:

नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यो ।
न च प्रमादत्तपसा वाप्यलिङ्गात् ॥

> "This Supreme Spirit is not reached by the weakling, nor is it attained by extravagances nor by purposeless or undirected asceticism",

To offset such an argument, some would urge that the Indian mind has been, all through, content to recognize and placate a multitude of divine, semi-divine and malign entities and has indulged in a multitude of art expressions, some crude

and others bewildering, that it preached simplicity and oneness and yet tolerated elaborate forms of polytheistic observances, and art, and worship. This contention is superficially valid and the Indian mind was no doubt tolerant almost to a fault; but such tolerance was based, not on ignorance or fraud, but on indulgent comprehension of different levels of human attainment. These critics may be reminded of the saying contained in one of the Upanishads of the Sama Veda that true yogis do not perceive Siva in images or idols but in oneself; it is for the mental concentration of the less enlightened that forms and images have been created:

शिवमात्मनि पश्यन्ति प्रतिमासु न योगिनः ।
अज्ञानां भावनार्थाय प्रतिमाः परिकल्पिताः ॥

The ultimate demand of the spirit was reflected in a prayer, not for boons or blessings, but that the Supreme may lead us from falsehood to truth, from darkness to light and from death to immortality:

असतो मा सद्गमय
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय
मृत्योर्माऽमृतं गमय ।

The Gayatri is likewise an invocation to the Sun as the embodiment of supreme light and energy and the prayer is not for worldly success or prosperity, but only that our intellects may be illumined. The prayer is addressed not to an outside agency, but to the universal spirit immanent in all parts of the Universe.

यस्मिन् सर्वं यतः सर्वं यः सर्वं सर्वतश्च यः ।

"In whom is everything, from whom derives everything, who is everything and who is everywhere."

The abstract doctrines expounded in these precepts and sayings are supplemented and reinforced by practical guidance. The Buddha in one of his great sermons preached:

"Live—ye who must—
Make golden stairways of your weakness;
By daily sojourn with those phantasies rise
To lovelier verities,

So shall ye pass to clearer heights and find
Easier ascents and lighter loads of sins,
And larger will to burst the bonds of sense,
Entering the Path."

The Gita takes up the thread and, resting itself on the indispensability of action and endeavour in this world, asserts that efficiency in the performance of one's daily task is true yoga. The Gita also demands equanimity and eschewal of differences (*samatva*) and finally points to detachment coupled with awareness as the solution of life's problems. The most succinct summary of the teachings of the Gita is perhaps contained in verse 19 of Chapter III:

तस्मादसक्तः सततं
कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।

"Therefore should you perform obligatory or necessary actions without attachment to their fruit or results."

The Gita is in reality a synthesis of knowledge, work and faith as the instruments of attainment. In a series of unforgettable verses in the 12th Chapter are set out the difficulties and perils attendant on the contemplation of the unmanifested and impersonal aspects of divinity, and we are furnished with a prescription indicating the various forms of approach suitable to one's stage of mental evolution. The translation of these doctrines into the life of the work-a-day world was exemplified in the great epics and in the life-stories of the heroes and heroines of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas.

The Ramayana, like all the ancient epics of the world, is simple and direct in narration, and Valmiki, the first of the great secular poets, brought into triumphant operation one of the innate faculties of the Indian mind, namely, the gift of narration of simple and striking stories outlining life's problems and also pointing a way to life's achievements. Such stories characterize not only the epics but collections of parables like the *Panchatantra* and the *Hitopadesa*. India has been responsible for no small proportion of the world's proverbial philosophy starting with the Buddhist Jataka stories and anecdotes

of animals and continued in the Puranic narratives. Being perennially true as well as picturesque, these appeal directly to the mind of man and child alike. Perhaps the Ramayana presents the completest picture of the workings of the Indian mind, and it has in turn been responsible for the normal Indian attitude towards life's problems. A few examples may be cited to show the flawless simplicity of language and the inevitability of thought characteristic of what by successive generations of Indians has been acclaimed as the greatest as well as the oldest of poems *(kavyas)*.

सुलभाः पुरुषाः राजन् सततं प्रियवादिनः ।
अप्रियस्य तु पथ्यस्य वक्ता श्रोता च दुर्लभः ॥

"O King, common indeed are persons who always speak that which is pleasing; but rare indeed is he who will speak that which is not pleasing but good, and rare too is he who will hear it."

उत्साहो बलवानार्य नास्त्युत्साहात् परं बलम् ।
सोत्साहस्यास्ति लोकेऽस्मिन् न किञ्चिदपि दुर्लभम् ॥

"O noble one, hope is indeed mighty. There is no power mightier than hope. To one possessed of hope there is nothing unattainable in this world."

The Ramayana also frequently exemplifies a skill in unexpected simile which is one of the characteristics of Indian literary art.

तस्य सन्दिदिहे बुद्धिः मुहुः सीतां निरीक्ष्यतु ।
आम्नायानामयोगेन विद्यां प्रशिथिलामिव ॥

"His mind still wavered, though he repeatedly looked at her, who was shorn of grace like learning divorced from practice."

Parallel with this development in Aryan India was the Dravidian output of apophthegms and philosophic poetry, exemplified by the works of the Tamil saints and seers, Saivite and Vaishnavite, who singing and writing in a fundamentally different language, continued and in some ways bettered Sanskrit tradition.

We may next pass in review the classical period of Indian

poesy. Describing in the *Meghaduta* the gathering of the rain-clouds in the monsoon season, the annual migration of cranes, the course of the Rewa (Narmada) on its pebbly bed and the dance of the peacocks in Ujjain; or in the *Raghuvamsa* observing the crisp curling of the breakers in mid-ocean as seen from the air; or again in *Sakuntala*, furnishing inimitable pen-pictures of deer fleeing from the huntsman's arrow, of Kasyapa's hermitage and of Sakuntala's passion for the trees and the denizens of the forest, Kalidasa achieves a verbal inevitability which is the prerogative of all supreme poets. But Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti and Bharavi also achieve a verbal compression hardly attainable save in Sanskrit and even in that marvellous language not often attained after the Sutra period. Shakespeare and Bacon, Keats and Goethe and Pascal are perhaps the foremost European examples of such a combination. When Shakespeare observes in *King Lear:*

"Men must endure their going hence,
Even as their coming hither:
Ripeness is all",

or when Kalidasa utters the truth नीचैर्गच्छत्युपरि च दशा चक्रनेमिक्रमेण ("Human fortunes go up and down as do the spokes of a revolving wheel"), we realize that word and meaning and harmony have attained indissoluble union.

Generally speaking, however, Indian classical poetry after Kalidasa and commencing with Bhavabhuti and proceeding until we come to the *Prabodha Chandrodaya* is mainly concerned with the search after preciosity and too often with verbal exuberance and elaboration. These poets and playwrights, nevertheless, exhibited great skill in the delineation of human motives and dramatic situations. As time passed, the national predilection in favour of subtle analysis and the preoccupation with minute differences and analogies which were already discernible in the older Indian philosophy were intensified by the successors of Sankara and Ramanuja. Concentration upon words and their shades of meaning, upon intricate metrical forms, upon recondite logical concepts and their contrasts and congruences, was one of the temptations

of the Indian thinker; and these qualities indeed date from Patanjali—perhaps the greatest grammarian the world has seen—and are accentuated in Sri Harsha and Dandi and other authors of treatises on Poetics and Rhetoric, as well as in the compilers of the innumerable and mutually warring commentaries on the fundamental canons of Indian belief, the three accepted scriptures, the Upanishads, the Brahmasutra and the Gita. These tendencies were not exclusively displayed by philosophers, logicians and grammarians. All later verse and, even more so, all later prose (as in the romances, *Dasakumaracharita* and *Kadambari*) began to assume the form of a treasury of painfully intricate phraseology and ingenious simile and play upon words. The letter began to kill the spirit. This phenomenon is of common occurrence in the history of all cultures but was specially marked in Indian art and literature, whose exponents forgot that in the language of the poet

"Often ornateness
Goes with greatness,
Oftener felicity
Comes of simplicity."

Running through the whole of Indian culture and Indian art are certain uniform currents or tendencies, but one such feature is especially noteworthy. An early French philosopher spoke of the "good news of damnation" and developed a thesis in pursuance of which he maintained that man would never turn to the pursuit of good but for the fear of eternal damnation. According to him, morality was dependent on this basic verity. Such a mental attitude was practically absent throughout the history of Indian thought, which founded itself on the doctrines of transmigration and Karma and, therefore, never denied the possibility of salvation or realization to any being, if not in one birth or existence, then in another. Such a philosophy naturally led to a comprehensive conception of the Universe, cherishing few preferences and no exclusions, a conception illustrated by the unlimited range of subjects chosen for sculpture, painting and poetry, and the discarding of all pruderies and petty censorships. Allowance for the inescapable

diversity of human nature and human motives was thus one of the essentials of Indian culture. If culture be regarded not only from the point of view of the fine arts but also interpreted as a way of life, it is aptly summarized in the Taittiriya Upanishad in its 18th Anuvaka where the disciple is taught: "Let there be no neglect of truth or of daily duties or even of prudence or of the arts leading to prosperity. Let there be no neglect of the duties towards parents and preceptors or guests. Above all, let there be no neglect of study and of teaching." In the days when India was an effective factor in world affairs, she did not turn her face away from the world and its compromises and its needs, however commonplace. Some of her greatest philosophers were, like Janaka, among her most notable kings and some of her Rshis were great in counsel and not above human failings. The mellowness of the Indian attitude is its abiding characteristic. The essentials of its code are summarized in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad in the words, तदेतत्त्रयं शिक्षेत् दमं दानं दयामिति ("Self-restraint, generosity and compassion"). And in the first verse of one of the earliest Upanishads we light upon this great maxim : तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः ("By renunciation shall you best enjoy"). This profound saying may be remembered along with the yearning challenge of Nachiketas to Yama, the God of Death, in the Katha Upanishad:

येयं प्रेतेविचिकित्सा मनुष्ये अस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीतिचैके ।
एतद्विद्यामनुशिष्टस्त्वयाऽहं वराणामेष वरस्तृतीयः ॥

"This is my enquiry: Some say (the soul) exists after the death of man, others say it does not exist. This I should like to know, instructed by thee: This is the third (and greatest) of the boons that I crave." They are the compendia of the age-long Indian ideals of life and aspiration in their strength and weakness, their achievements and failures. In fine, the psychological history of India can be best understood by those who bear in mind the comprehensiveness of the Indian approach to life with its inevitable reactions. Its abundant tolerance saved India from inquisitions and the worst effects of fanaticism, but it also gave little scope for burning mission-

ary zeal and organizing energy. Its preoccupation with the things of the spirit had as a concomitant the growing neglect of physical science and of the arts of amelioration. Its eschewal of dogmatism too frequently led to lack of mental vigour and one-pointedness. At the same time it cannot be too often stressed that in the history of Indian thought and activity, there has been on the one hand no divorce between religion, art and philosophy, and on the other, its philosophy and essential faith are not dependent for their validity and compulsiveness on any single revelation or saviour, any dogma or miracle. Its scriptures and its art embody and portray many abnormal or supernatural happenings and personages, but they are not pivotal. Indian culture is not based on a single book or a single incarnation or an exclusive ideal in the sense that without it, it loses its *raison d'etre.* A great Tamil devotee apostrophizes the Devi thus:

> "Thou representest the illumination of
> Perfect knowledge that leads to utter bliss;
> In thee are included all religions and beliefs,
> As the sea includes all the confluent rivers
> and streams."

The concluding lines furnish a just characterization of the striving and attainment of Indian Culture.

4. THE BASIS OF INDIAN ART EXPRESSION

Like a gem with many facets, art presents several aspects to its votaries. All great art is in one sense universal: the Rshis of the Upanishads, and Valmiki and Kalidasa perfected and displayed the same wide vision and inner appeal as may be found in Homer, Shakespeare, Dante and Goethe. But in another and not less real sense, each art is conditioned by its genesis and its environment.

Indian art is multiform and it would be erroneous to over-simplify its underlying motif and basis, which are as variegated as human nature itself; but, taking a bird's-eye view of the paths trodden by Indian seers and artists throughout the ages, certain definite lines of progress stand out conspicuously, and it will be my endeavour to outline some of them. I may premise my observations by stressing that our art is so interwoven with our spiritual heritage and achievement that they cannot be treated as disparate.

Our art, in which must be included both sacred and secular literature, architecture and sculpture, music and painting and, demonstrably, also the Indian way of life developed through centuries of achievement and failure and adaptation, has had a longer history than any other tradition save, perhaps, the Egyptian and the Chinese; and in each one of its fields of activity there have been currents and cross-currents as well as ups and downs. For my present purpose, I shall confine my attention to literature and incidentally deal with music and sculpture.

The truly epoch-making discoveries in mathematical and astronomical science for which the Indian intellect was responsible demonstrated one of its dominant tendencies, namely, the ceaseless endeavour to simplify complex ideas and to express them in the most succinct form. The invention of the zero and of the imaginary quantity can be cited as examples. The first characteristic that strikes the student is the attempt

in all departments of art to reduce the phenomena and manifestations of human life and the human mind to their elements. We may contemplate the Gayatri, with its prayer not for immediate salvation but for enlightenment; we may recall immortal aphorisms like the great *Mahavakyas*, one of which, तत्त्वमसि ("That Thou art") is the summation of Indian monistic thought in three words, or that other shattering revelation of the nature of the Infinite embodied in the double affirmation of a single word, नेति नेति ("not this, not this"); or we may ponder over such an utterance as the following from the Rgveda:

यस्य छायामृतं यस्य मृत्युः
कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ।

"Him whose shadow is death as well as life, we shall worship, whoever He be."

Is it not true that in all these affirmations we are struck by the concision or compression of inherently complicated ideas into a few significant words ? Thousands of other examples may be furnished, but I shall content myself with adverting only to the opening sentence of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* defining Yoga as controlling the activities of the *Chitta*, योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः. This is an epitome of the whole theory and practice of the system. Likewise, the commencement of the *Brahma Sutras*,

अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा
जन्माद्यस्य यतः

is the germ of all the variegated philosophic efflorescence of later years. The Gita naturally affords many instances of this trait of the Indian mind. The two Gita texts, समत्वं योग उच्यते ("Poise or evenness may be said to be the true Yoga") and योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ("Efficiency in work is true Yoga") and the words of the Isavasya Upanishad, तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः ("By renunciation shalt thou enjoy") are an adequate abstract of Hindu thought operating in the region of human conduct. Kalidasa, when he describes, in the *Meghasandesa*, the ups and downs of human life in terms of the revolution of a cart-wheel, illustrates the same faculty :

नीचैर्गच्छत्युपरि च दशा चक्रनेमिक्रमेण ।

The symbolism of Indian sculpture, its concentration on the idea or ideal underlying a figure and its passion for typification originate in the same mind-process. To say this is not to forget that the Indian poet, sculptor and musician have also revelled in exuberance of interpretation, detail and ornament. Indeed in the description or portrayal of emotions or forms or ideas, Indian art has been generally associated with deliberate complexities and elaborate ornamentation. I regard these elaborations as the natural reactions which, in the history of all forms of art, serve as the exception that proves the rule.

Music, which is generally regarded as the aptest vehicle for emotional expression and whose appeal is the most direct, furnishes a striking instance of the special genius of the Indian mind. Melodic themes termed *Ragas* are circumscribed by elaborate rules but the forms of *Raga* music have not become obsolete mainly because full scope is allowed for improvisation and the many interpretations which characterize great musicians. Dealing with the Indian *Raga* form, Dilip Kumar Roy, in a recent book of essays entitled *Among the Great*, deprecates the introduction into our music of the system of notation and observes that, while on the one hand a piece of music has the advantage of being stabilized and perpetuated the moment it is caught in the toils of a system of notation, yet, on the other hand, the advantage cannot but be at the expense of its soaring capacity, a capacity that is retained intact by a music that is not standardized and written down. What the author calls the creative exposition of the *Ragas*, which while maintaining the inescapable restrictions inseparable from high art yet allows free play for interpretation, is perhaps the best way of describing the development of Indian technique.

Going through the various *Agamas* dealing with the designing of images, one is struck by the detailed measurements and minutely recorded relative distances and proportions of the various limbs which are regarded as compulsory. But for the fact that the supreme examples of Indian sculpture are ample proofs to the contrary, one would have thought that such insistence on exact measurement would have detracted

from artistic initiative and creative excellence. In sculpture and in fresco painting, in the creation of the figures of the Buddha or Pragnaparamita, Nataraja, Venugopala or the Devi, in the portrayal of the men and women of the Ajanta frescoes and of their background, the main fact to remember is that, with a rigid adherence to self-imposed discipline, there exists a marvellous freedom of expressive symbolism and of subtle expression. The artist in these cases exercises the same liberty in restraint as the classical dancer who conforms to the exacting dictates of the laws of the *mudras* and yet illustrates with triumphant facility all the diversities of emotion and passion.

Equal in significance to this attempt at concentration is what I shall describe as the fearlessness of Indian thought and its expression. Just as the Chhandogya Upanishad reaches its climax in the dauntless saying: तत् सत्यं सऽआत्मा तत् त्वमसि ("This is the truth, He is Atman, That Thou art") so likewise the apex of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is the great announcement equating the Supreme with fearlessness, अभंय वै ब्रह्म. This adherence to the ideal of limitless courage is demonstrated in many ways. There is no subject however lofty, no topic however homely or ugly or even 'sensual' that is tabooed. Details of human and animal anatomy are not draped over but treated as part of life and therefore not outside the artist's purview. The problems and phenomena of sex are not smirkingly concealed or provocatively camouflaged but frankly discussed as by Vatsyayana and the most serious-minded poets and philosophers. The compositeness of life, including its glories and abasements, its divinities and its hobgoblins, its ecstasies and its depths, is the theme of Indian art. Those persons reveal a want of perspective who affect to be repelled by a frank portrayal of the human form and human appetites in Indian poetry and romance or in the paintings and sculptures in our temples and palaces. The realisms and symbolisms of France, America and England were anticipated here many centuries ago. An amazing demonstration of this fearlessness lies in the approach towards the ultimate problems of existence. The Rgveda, after having apostrophized the Supreme and

described the Oversoul as the dispenser of strength and the embodiment and origin of the Atman, ends up with the assertion already cited " It is that unknown, whoever it be, that deserves our worship" (कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम). In an unforgettable passage in the Kathopanishad occurs this statement:

अस्तीति ब्रुवतोऽन्यत्र
कथं तदुपलभ्यते

"The Supreme is not attained by words, nor by the mind, nor by the eye. How is it to be perceived save by the assertion that it exists ? "

Realization and attainment are to the Indian thinker not the results of conformity and weak acquiescence. नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः ("The Supreme is not attained by the weakling.") This daring and at the same time comprehending attitude towards outer and inner phenomena is perhaps the foremost contribution of India to the thought processes of world evolution.

And, not inconsistently, arises the feeling of the inevitable compositeness of life and aspiration. The necessity of tolerance of divergent thoughts and actions becomes evident with the emergence of the consciousness of the oneness of all creation. All aspects of life, all ambitions, all objects of endeavour are viewed impartially and there are no rigid exclusions and no selfish monopolies. Discoursing to the student after his period of apprenticeship, the preceptor in the Taittiriya Upanishad exhorts:

सत्यान्न प्रमदितव्यम्
धर्मान्न प्रमदितव्यम्
कुशलान्न प्रमदितव्यम्
भूत्यै न प्रमदितव्यम्

"Swerve not from Truth, swerve not from Righteousness, and at the same time swerve not from the pursuit of prosperity and worldly happiness."

The practical aspects of life and the attainments of this world are, as much as the things of the spirit, the themes of the philosopher and poet. This effort at harmony may be

traced throughout our artistic history. It is as old as the Rgveda and is shown in the joyous invitation:

सङ्गच्छध्वं संवदध्वं
सं वो मनांसि जानताम्

"Let us come together, let us discuss in unison and let our minds be united."

Reconciliation, tolerance and harmony are, next to daring and courage, perhaps the most outstanding features of Indian thought. Not for nothing did the Brihadaranyaka proclaim that the three things to be taught to humanity are self-control, giving (self-sacrifice) and compassion, तदेतत्त्रयं शिक्षेत् दमं दानं दयामिति. Sankaracharya, in one of his works, *Svatmanirupanam*, asserts with lofty detachment that prayer and all forms of worship and ceremonial are transcended by one who has seen the Truth (नाहं नमामि दैवान् । देवानतीत्य न सेवते देवम् ।।). He is also the author of *Sivananda Lahari* and *Soundarya Lahari* and some of the most touchingly appealing devotional hymns in adoration of the various incarnations of Godhead in the forms of Dakshinamoorti, Subrahmanya, Narasimha or Parvati.

The same philosophy which in the Darsanopanishad declares:

अज्ञानां भावनार्थाय
प्रतिमाः परिकल्पिताः ।

"Images are created for the contemplation of the unknowing",

is tolerant not only of image worship but of all outpourings of the soul towards any manifestation, however lowly, of the divine. The explanation, of course, is simple. In a notable passage in the Atharva Veda the Supreme being in the form of Varuna is described as the omnipresent witness:

द्वौ संनिषिध्य यन्मन्त्रयेते
राजा तद्वेद वरुणः तृतीयः ।

"When two persons sit together and take counsel with each other, the great King Varuna is also present as the third and knows what takes place."

The immanence and omnipresence of the eternal spirit, if adequately understood and realized, must break down barriers of all kinds, physical or mental. In the Krishna Yajur Veda, the Rshi says:

मधुमनिष्ये
मधुजनिष्ये
मधु वद्यामि
मधु-वदिष्यामि ।

> "I shall contemplate in terms of sweetness, generate sweetness, convey sweetness and speak sweetness."

If the validity of this creed be acknowledged then one must perforce subscribe in the language of the Gita to the gospel:

> "Whoever desires to worship any form of Godhead according to his own lights with devotion, him shall I fortify and assist."

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः
श्रद्धयाऽर्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां
तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥

Lord Krishna in truth gives their proper place to various forms of human activities. He praises renunciation, but he says that mere renunciation does not necessarily lead to liberation:

न च संन्यासनादेव
सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ।

He insists that mankind cannot escape from action and the results of action, and his great prescription is as simple as it is conclusive. Humanity's obligation is only to perform the duty that is next to it and not to be concerned with the results: कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन. This direct perception of the facts of life, the realization of the many-sidedness of existence and the doctrine of live and let-live have been, from the days of the Vedas right through the troubled centuries of Indian history, the main source of inner strength and consolation to all who have inherited or assimilated our culture.

Although an attempt has been made to deal with more than one manifestation of the Indian genius, it is possible to integrate all that I have said. Adopting the language employed by Aldous Huxley in his *Ends and Means*, the basis of Indian self-expression may be best defined with reference to its ' awareness ' and its feeling that self-transcendence is reached only through self-consciousness, which is another aspect of awareness.

5. RAMANA MAHARSHI

It is natural to believe in great men; and in the language of Emerson, the search after the great is the dream of youth and the most serious occupation of manhood. The same philosopher, dealing with representative men, insisted that in order best to fulfil his functions, the great man must be related to us, and our life should receive from him some promise of expansion. He added that there are persons who, either by their character or by their actions, answer questions which we have not the skill to put.

Outlining the life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Romain Rolland emphasizes that the first qualification for knowing, judging and even for condemning a religion or a philosophy is to have made experiments for oneself in that field; and in this connexion it cannot be forgotten that even many persons who sincerely think that they are free from all religious beliefs actually live, as has been stated, "immersed in a state of super-rational consciousness which some term socialism, others communism, others again nationalism or humanitarianism". The test that has been suggested for passing a verdict in this matter has been thus expressed: If one turns fearlessly towards the search for truth at all costs and prepared for any sacrifice, he should be called religious. For, religion is definitely the faith in an end to human effort higher than the individual life or even the life of the existing society.

In India, as Swami Vivekananda has asserted, all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence. For nearly four thousand years what Romain Rolland calls the tree of vision has renewed itself tirelessly; all kinds of fruits ripen upon its boughs at the same time; always side by side are found all kinds of Godheads from the lowest to the highest, to the unnamable and the boundless One. India has also produced throughout the ages a series of path-finders or universal

souls. The tree of vision has been aptly described in the Upanishads and in the Gita as the Eternal Asvattha, whose roots are in the sky and whose branches pervade the earth.

The world abounds with scriptures, revelations and philosophies, all of which seek to expound the truth; but although this truth is one and eternal, it expresses itself in time and through the mind of man; and therefore, as Sri Aurobindo has stated, every scripture and revelation contains two elements, one temporary, perishable, belonging to the ideas of the period and the country in which it was produced, the other applicable to all ages and countries.

I have deliberately adverted, by way of introduction, to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Sri Aurobindo Ghose as souls whose lives and teachings afford both an analogy and a contrast to the life-work of Ramana Maharshi. It is a daring task that I have attempted in discussing one with whom I have not come in direct contact and of whom all I have learnt is through his teachings, and through conversations with those who have been profoundly influenced by him. Sankara, in his *Viveka Choodamani*, claims that there are three things which are rare and due to the grace of God, namely, to be born a human being, to long for liberation and to obtain counsel from a perfected sage. Not only in our scriptures, but right through the ages, the Guru and the Sishya are pre-ordained for each other and one seeks the other out, as Socrates did Plato. My only explanation and position is that such a call is essential and cannot be anticipated or forced.

Mr. G. R. Subbaramayya, whose pen-name is *Aksharajna*, has published a pamphlet on Sri Ramana Maharshi's life. It is a life without many outward incidents but a life dedicated from the beginning to realization and an insistent and absorbed search directed to *Vairagya* and God-quest. Renunciation and realization, and the power that comes from both, seem to have been the prerogatives of the Maharshi from his early youth. The Hindu ideal has always been in favour of teaching through life and not so much through words. The Maharshi is described as being always in *Sahaja Samadhi*—an uninterrupted

state of realization, wherein one is able to attend to any work that turns up without feeling disturbed or distracted. His disciples claim, as is stated of Dakshinamoorti, that he teaches more by silence than by sermons.

India has never committed the mistake of overstressing the reality of the world and its phenomena and strata, and the West is fast arriving at the same conclusion. Sir James Jeans says with reference to Einstein's theories, "We find that space means nothing apart from our perception of objects and time means nothing apart from our experience of events. Space begins to appear as a fiction created by our minds. Matter, in the language of Bertrand Russell, has become as ghostly as anything in a spiritualist sense." This consciousness, now fortified by the researches of physical and chemical science, has been the fundamental concept of Indian religious teachers who have always regarded the world as unreal and ever-changing. In order to explain the approach towards the great problems of the world illustrated by the Maharshi, let me quote two questions and answers set out in the Maharshi's Gospel :

D. How does a *Grihastha* fare in the scheme of *Moksha* ? Should he not necessarily become a mendicant in order to attain Liberation ?

M. Why do you think you are a *Grihastha* ? Similar thoughts that you are a *Sannyasin* will haunt you, even if you go out as a *Sannyasin*. Whether you continue in the household or renounce it and go to the forest, your mind haunts you. The ego is the source of thought. It creates the body and the world, and it makes you think of being a *Grihastha*. If you renounce, it will only substitute the thought of *Sannyasa* for that of *Grihastha*, and the environment of the forest for that of the household. But the mental obstacles are always there for you. They even increase greatly in the new surroundings. It is no help to change the environment. The one obstacle is the mind; it must be got over, whether in the home

**Book I*, pp. 8, 9.

or in the forest. If you can do it in the forest, why not in the home? Therefore, why change the environment? Your efforts can be made even now, whatever be the environment.

D: Is it possible to enjoy *Samadhi* while busy in worldly work?

M: The feeling 'I work' is the hindrance. Ask yourself 'Who works?' Remember who you are. Then the work will not bind you; it will go on automatically. Make no effort either to work or to renounce; your effort is the bondage. What is destined to happen will happen. If you are destined not to work, work cannot be had even if you hunt for it; if you are destined to work, you will not be able to avoid it; you will be forced to engage yourself in it. So leave it to the Higher Power; you cannot renounce or retain as you choose.

It is a remarkable proof of the unifying faculty of the Maharshi's personality that he has gathered around him men of such varying equipment and experience as *Aksharajna*, B.V. Narasimha Swami, Grant Duff and Suddhananda Bharathi. In the book entitled *Self Realisation—Life and Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Narasimha Swami has furnished an absorbingly interesting pen-picture of his daily life, his remarkable encounter with thieves and his sympathy for and brotherliness towards men and animals alike. The Maharshi has sedulously avoided publicity and controversies, social or religious. Many persons who have visited the Ashram, have recounted their experiences, one of which is typical. Pascaline Mallet, in her book *Turn Eastwards*, speaks of a central figure whose serene strength and perfect poise seem to fill the whole place with unutterable peace. Paul Brunton speaks, in his *A Search in Secret India*, of a silent figure on a couch and his strange reception, ostensibly characterized by indifference. Let me quote his own words: "My initial bewilderment, my perplexity at being totally ignored, slowly fade away as this strange fascination begins to grip me more firmly. But it is not till the second hour of the uncommon scene that I become aware of the silent, resistless change which is taking place within my mind. One by one, the

questions which I prepared in the train with such meticulous accuracy drop away. For it does not now seem to matter whether they are asked or not, and it does not matter whether I solve the problems which have hitherto troubled me. I know only that a steady river of quietness seems to be flowing near me, that a great peace is penetrating the inner reaches of my being, and that my thought-tortured brain is beginning to arrive at some rest.

"How small seem those questions which I have asked myself with such frequency! How petty grows the panorama of the lost years! I perceive with sudden clarity that the intellect creates its own problems and then makes itself miserable trying to solve them. This is indeed a novel concept to enter the mind of one who has hitherto placed such high value upon intellect."

The Maharshi has not written much; but what he has told us in his *Ulladu Narpadu* or *Sad-Vidya* is a pithy synopsis of what is usually termed Vedantic teaching. Translating the Swamiji's "Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala", Grant Duff positively avers that he felt that he was in direct contact with one who had passed beyond the boundaries of the senses and was merged in the absolute of his true self. The Hymns are the efflorescence of the mystic urge and the Maharshi speaks of a heart which is different from the physical one but whose secrets have to be learnt in order to discard that "Self which is the aggregate of sense impressions". It has always been one of the fundamentals of Hindu life and faith that those who wish to be free must, in the language of the Gita, seek and reverently question those who have seen the truth and freed themselves. Speaking of the necessity of a Guru, the Maharshi himself was asked by some one whether the belief in the necessity of a Guru is correct. He gave the following reply:

"So long as one thinks of himself as little—*laghu*—he must take hold of the great—the *Guru*; he must not, however, look upon the Guru as a person; the sage is never other than the real self of the disciple. When that Self is realized then there is neither Guru nor disciple." The question arose because the

sage himself had no Guru, at least no outer Guru. On another occasion the sage said : "A teacher is needed if one has to learn something new; but this is a case of unlearning."

On yet another occasion he said : "When camphor burns, no residue is left. The mind must be like camphor; it must melt away and be wholly consumed by the earnest resolve to find and be the real Self; by this resolve the 'Who am I' quest becomes efficacious. When the mind is thus consumed, when no trace of it as mind is left, it has become resolved into the Self."

Asked how one can find his Guru, the sage answered: "By intense meditation." *

One of his disciples, Vasishta Ganapathi Muni, has published *Sri Ramana Gita*, which, he claims, embodies the fundamentals of the three kinds of Yoga. Various collections have been published, both in Tamil and in Sanskrit, outlining his teachings and precepts. All of them are characterized by a directness of approach and a felicity of expression that come from enlightenment. Loving disciples have gathered and collected every saying of his. His daily life and the calm that characterizes it, and that is diffused by it in his environment, have been actually described as matters of daily experience. One like me, who has, up to now, not experienced personal contact with this remarkable personage, can only say that all that he has learnt of and read about him furnishes proof that we are face to face with one of those beings who, having embarked on the eternal quest of the human soul, has not only attained the peace of realization but is able to communicate that peace around him.

* *Maha Yoga*, pp. 264, 265, 266.

6. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

The death of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy* undoubtedly leaves a void which it is difficult to fill.

The multiform contacts between Ceylon and India have always been intimate and have resulted in, among other things, a lively and continuous interchange of ideas, literary and artistic. From the days of the Ramayana and through the Buddhist epoch, Lanka played a notable part in the history of India and *vice versa*.

The middle of the last century witnessed the activities of three men who did a great deal to foster unity of outlook and friendliness between Ceylon and India and who, in their several ways, contributed to promote the cause of Indian culture. All three—Sir P. Arunachalam and his brother, Sir P. Ramanathan, as well as Sir Muthukumaraswami—were natives of Jaffna, which was practically an offshoot of the Tamil land; but every one of them played a great part in the life and politics of Ceylon. The literary and educational work of Sir P. Arunachalam and Sir P. Ramanathan are well known to every one in the south of India, and Sir Muthukumaraswami not only made a great position for himself but bequeathed to India and the world of art his son, Ananda Coomaraswamy.

The generation to which Coomaraswamy's father belonged adopted European ways and educational methods, in pursuance of which young Coomaraswamy was sent to England for education very early in life and he wound up his academic career with a Doctorate of Science in London University. Returning to Ceylon, he accepted office as Director of the Mineralogical Survey of the Island, but the claims of literature and art were paramount and he devoted his life to the study and elucidation of Indian art in its various aspects. His equipment was many-sided and is proved by his Fellowship

* Dr. Coomaraswamy died in 1947.

both of the Geographical and the Linnean Societies. As with Tagore and J. C. Bose, so was it with Coomaraswamy: his Indian contemporaries began to recognize his merits only after he had been made a Research Fellow in Persian and Indian Art in that centre of intellectual activity. Both in that capacity and as Vice-President of the India Society, he did pioneering work in explaining to the English and American public the meaning and significance of the artistic output of India.

His services were even more fundamental. Macaulay had held up to scorn the literature and the legends of India, and European connoisseurs had damned Indian art with faint praise. It should be remembered that the traditional arts and crafts of India have survived the impacts of invasion and vandalism; and in various corners of India, masons and sculptors are still to be found, especially in the Indian States, who continue the vital tradition of the immemorial past. Unfortunately, educated India, in the early years of the 19th century, was almost studiedly neglectful of its heritage. Lord Curzon did more than any Indian for the preservation of the monuments of the country. The arousing of the national consiousness with regard to the ancient and mediaeval art of India was largely the work of Ananda Coomaraswamy and E.B. Havell; and credit must also go to Abanindranath Tagore and his followers, including Nandalal Bose, for promoting the renaissance of Indian painting by drawing inspiration from Ajanta. Happily such ignoring of our art is a thing of the past and India is now on the threshold of a new age. The new nationalistic movement has indeed created a revolution against the imitation of the West.

Combining in himself a deep knowledge of Buddhistic philosophical and artistic masterpieces and those of the Aryan and Dravidian intellect and spirit, Dr. Coomaraswamy started a movement for national education in Lanka in the vernaculars as an essential preliminary to the revival of Indian culture. He lectured in American and European centres on Indian and Singhalese art. He studied the methods of the

Indian craftsman and wrote on his technique. He spoke on art and Swadeshi and analysed the Visvakarma legend in collaboration with Sister Nivedita and produced excellent examples of Indian art to illustrate the treasures of India and Ceylon. The name of Dr. Coomaraswamy is specially associated with the study and exposition of what has been designated "Rajput Painting". The term is perhaps misleading for the reason that, as pointed out by Mr Havell, although the traditions of Hindu painting were specially formative in Rajputana, yet they were by no means exclusively Rajput. Travancore, Cochin, Pudukkotta, Kashmir, Bengal and Gujerat produced their own Schools of Art which owed their inspiration to the same influences that operated in Rajputana; and all Hindu painters, even when painting on paper, followed the technique of mural painting which was a feature of the Hindu Chitrasala. Whereas the Muslim painter was concerned mainly with the life of the court and the camp, the Hindu artist was not only a chronicler of rural and scenic aspects but essentially a religious teacher clothing the mysteries of religion in familiar garb and introducing into his paintings the events of daily life. The so-called Rajput painting is, in fact, a sequel to the Buddhist frescoes wherein the Indian artist displayed perfect acquaintance with the intricacies of the effects of light, and Coomaraswamy himself has thus described Indian art: "This vigorous archaic outline is the basis of its language. Wiry, distinct and sharp as that golden rule of art and life desired by Blake: sensitive, reticent and tender, it perfectly reflects the severe self-control and sweet serenity of Indian life."

Dr. Coomaraswamy specialized in the exposition of Hindu painting, but this was not his only sphere of activity. He published his own reading of Lord Buddha and his gospel. He tried to effect a new approach to the Vedas and he wrote on the transformation of Nature in art, in addition to compiling a sumptuous catalogue of the Indian collection in the museum at Boston. All art is one although its manifestations may be many; and it is therefore not surprising that

Coomaraswamy lectured and wrote on the art of dance as illustrated by the Dance of Siva and Kali and Krishna, and collaborated with an Andhra expert in a publication on *Abhinaya* entitled *The Mirror of Gesture*. His work was ever characterized by a keen faculty of discrimination as well as the utmost delicacy of feeling. Behind and above all his activities there was a passionate devotion to Indian aspirations and an ambition to create in the country of his origin, a devotion to those impulses which made India the paradise of fine art in the days of the epic past. Interpretation to the European and American world of the essential and inseparable symbolism of Indian painting and sculpture and explanation of the inner spirit and rationale of Indian art were the main contributions of Dr. Coomaraswamy; and reading one of his latest works, *Why Exhibit Works of Art*, published in 1943, one realizes with what concentrated enthusiasm he applied himself to his self-imposed duty of interpreting Indian thought-forms such as those personifying the allegories of Nataraja dancing the cosmic dance, Krishna, as the protector of his flock, capturing the souls of his devotees with the music of his flute, and the eternal virgin, Kanya Kumari, waiting for her union with the Lord.

7. IQBAL, THE POET AND HIS MESSAGE

Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha's latest book, *Iqbal, the Poet and His Message*, is a *tour de force* in more senses than one. Into a crowded life compact with such varied activities as those of a journalist, a lawyer, a legislator, an administrator and an educationist, Dr. Sinha has also compressed much literary activity. This volume is more than an attempt to evaluate the poetry and philosophy of a distinguished author and public man. It is also a revelation of the author's own colourful personality and his many-sided erudition.

After dealing with Iqbal's contributions to literature and philosophy, the author furnishes his own interpretation of Islam; and it was with surprise and pleasure that I discovered a quotation from one of my speeches wherein I had pleaded that the religion of Mohammad, as conceived by the great Prophet, was not a religion of division or persecution but a religion of tolerance and fellow-feeling. Dr. Sinha, referring *in extenso* to the *Quran*, cites several passages proclaiming the unity of God and the equality of humanity and finally quotes Kabir, "If the Creator dwells in tabernacles only, whose dwelling is the Universe ?" He points out that Quranic Islam is based on a correct appreciation of the laws of human nature and its limitations, and takes a realistic view of the needs of humanity, trying by practical methods to elevate it from imperfection to perfection. The subject of the struggle between dogmatism and realism in the history of Islam is also dealt with in detail and it is from this point of view that Dr. Sinha proceeds to analyse Iqbal's work.

Sir Muhammad Iqbal's life was not eventful; and as any one can perceive who reads the account of the relations between him and Sir Fazl-i-Hussain, it is obvious that Iqbal did not possess the gift of compromise, and thus failed to obtain the worldly positions to which his talents entitled him. He was of Kashmeri Brahmin ancestry. After a short period as

lecturer and professor, he entered the Bar, but was not particularly successful in that profession. The State of Bhopal awarded him a pension of Rs. 500 a month and enabled him to pursue a literary life. He attended the Round Table Conference but resigned his membership, returned to India and strongly denounced the British Government. Attempts made by his friends to help him were often frustrated by his want of tact. As early as 1931, he spoke on the importance of constituting a North-Western Indian Muslim State and he was, thus, one of the originators of the Pakistan idea and, although in his earlier poems, he had sung of the unity and greatness of India, yet he gradually began to emphasize what he considered to be the radical differences between Hindus and Muslims. He consistently opposed territorial nationalism and surprisingly favoured the creation of a theocratically-governed Muslim State. His first important work, *The Secrets of Self*, was translated by Professor Nicholson of Cambridge and Iqbal was knighted in recognition of his work as a philosopher and a poet. Although he took part in politics and at the Allahabad session of the Muslim League in 1930 stated unequivocally that he would like the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Provinces, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a consolidated North-Western Indian Muslim State, his chief interests in life were intellectual and cultural rather than political. As occasion arose from time to time, he alternately criticized severely the policy of the Congress and of the Muslim League. Dr. Sinha has stated that Iqbal's books do not give a correct impression of the man who was less of a communalist in his private life than he appeared to be in his books.

It is noteworthy that Iqbal came first into prominence through a poem which has been called the National Anthem of India. He started writing in Urdu; and Dr. Sinha and authorities like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru think that his best work was in Urdu and not in Persian which he chose as his vehicle in later years. In his poem on the *Himalayas* he goes so far as to say:

"The mountain of Sinai was only the scene of a temporary manifestation to Moses who-conversed with God
But thou art an illumination throughout for every observing eye",

and, in the Anthem, to which reference has been made, the following lines occur:

"Religion does not teach people to bear enmity to one another;
We are Indians and India is our Motherland.
Greece and Egypt and Rome—all have been obliterated from the world.
But our name and mark are still there.
There is a reason why our existence is not wiped out,
Though the revolutions of time have been inimical to us for centuries together."

He wrote a poem on Rama and on Swami Ram Thirth, who deliberately sought union with the Infinite by drowning himself; and finally, he composed verses entitled *Naya Shivala* ("New Temple"). This poem was written at a time when Hindu-Muslim relations were strained, and the following lines are worth quoting as illustrative of the catholicity of his views during the early years of his poetical career:

"Come, let us lift up together the veils of strangeness once again,
Let us reconcile the separated ones once again and erase marks of dualism.
Come, and let us build a new temple in this land,
Let our holy temple be the highest amongst the world's holy places.
Let us raise its spire so high as to touch the sky."

So strong was the poet's disgust with the communal life in the country that in a poem, *Voice of Anguish,* he expressed his desire to leave the country for good.

"What to talk of unity, here the very nearness is the

cause of disunity.
My countrymen have forgotten the secrets of love.
That is why they are not suited for the battle-field of existence.
Instead of oneness, the separation is extremely galling."

But by a speedy transition, the new phase of Iqbal's mentality began to be manifested. Dr. Sinha's analysis of Iqbal's mental development from the time of his return from Europe to the period when, in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, he pleaded for pan-Islamism and the non-territorial character of Islam, is penetrating. He began to advocate a return to early Islam and held that Hindu intellectualism and Islamic Sufism had destroyed the capacity of Muslims for action. Dr. Sinha points out that he was inspired by the vision of a world-wide State in which all Muslims should live in one fraternity, the idea of territorial patriotism and nationalism becoming hateful to him. Quoting from Sir Ahmed Hussain's article on Islamic mysticism, the author makes it clear that views on the relation of God and the world vary according to the stress laid on the knowledge-side, the feeling-side and the striving-side (the *Gnana*, *Bhakti* and *Karma* Yogas of Hindu philosophy) and that Dr. Iqbal has been less than just to himself in not realizing that Islam, like Hinduism, has developed all the three sides and that Sufism is not inconsistent with Islam.

There was a period when Iqbal became a specifically theological poet and took to writing almost exclusively in Persian. He, at this period, also began his attack on Hafiz and sang the praise of his Guru, Jalaluddin Rumi. He became severely critical of Western life and thought and carried on a crusade against Western civilization, contending that Western democracy was autocracy in disguise, and discussions in the legislatures, a camouflage of capitalists.

Dealing with Iqbal's philosophical background, the development of his ideas may be divided into three periods, during the first of which his conception of God was as eternal beauty and can be rightly described as intrinsically Platonic. In the second

period he became a mystic and almost a pantheist; and finally, under the influence of Bergson and Nietzche, he became an advocate of the Philosophy of Change, the eternal purpose being conceived of as nothing but a forward movement in consciousness. And each of these modifications of opinion found their expression in successive volumes of his poems, all of which, however, were distinguished by brilliant craftsmanship which, according to the best authorities, was more pronounced in Urdu than in Persian.

Before leaving this aspect of Iqbal's literary and philosophical activity, it may be well to realize what Dr. Sinha is at pains to point out, that Iqbal's devotion to Rumi involved his belief in doctrines which are the antithesis of Sufism. As this distinction is of great importance in the appraisal of Iqbal's work, it may be useful to clarify it. Rumi's conception of God is that just as the intellect rules over a man's body without being part and parcel of it, so the Infinite and Universal Intellect pervades the whole of the Universe without being part and parcel of it. Rumi does not attach much importance to the exact form of worship. On the other hand, the Sufi thinker and poet approximate to the Vedanta system, and I take the liberty of quoting from a great Sufi mystical poet who has not been referred to even by Dr. Sinha. I advert to Nuruddin Abdur Rahman Jami, who, in his *Salaman and Absal* sings as follows:

"Thou movest under all the Forms of Truth,
Under the Forms of all Created Things;
Look whence I will, still nothing I discern
But Thee in all the Universe, in which
Thyself Thou dost invest, and through the Eyes
Of Man, the subtle Censor, scrutinize.
No Entrance finds—no Word of This and That;
Do Thou my Separate and Derived Self
Make One with Thy Essential! Leave me room,
On that Divan which leaves no room for Two."

The so-called ten states of Sufism are paraphrases or modifications of the mental and psychological states outlined in

the Vedanta. In the language of a notable exponent, Sufism means that God makes thee die to thyself and alive in him. Such a creed did not accord with the later temperament of Iqbal and it was no wonder that he was a fierce opponent of Sufism in all its forms.

It is one of the remarkable things about this book that Dr. Sinha, although greatly attracted by the personality of Iqbal and his poetry, is able to speak with considerable detachment. He indeed says that Iqbal may have written the poetry of Universality but has produced dogmatic literature instead. Similarly, in speaking of Iqbal's political activities and his opposition to nationalism, which Iqbal denounces in all its forms, he shows that the poet rejects all modern political systems and upholds the early Islamic polity as against Imperialism, Bolshevism and Nationalism. Dr. Sinha, in an exhaustive analysis endeavours to prove that Iqbal's ideal has not been kept in view in Turkey or Arabia; he refers to the Arab League and proves that it is non-religious and secular and that Iqbal's basic sentiment was therefore not shared by latter-day Muslim statesmen. Iqbal fell foul with the League of Nations, spoke of it as an instance of selfish design and machinations and termed it an organization of thieves sitting in a graveyard for the distribution of shrouds. He remarked that nationalism was a cloak for capitalists to play their game undetected. He reproached modern democracy as representing nothing but the oppression of the poor by the rich under the guise of commercialism.

Dr. Sinha has dealt with a posthumous work of Iqbal which he describes as representing a passionate revolt against the civilization of the West, the irreligiousness of the present age, the orthodoxy of the Brahmin and similar matters. At the same time, in that work occurs the following message to humanity:

> "Art thou in the stage of 'life', 'death' or 'death-in-life'?
> Invoke the aid of three witnesses to verify the 'station':
> The first witness is thine own consciousness,
> The second witness is the consciousness of another Ego,

The third witness is God's consciousness."

In a chapter distinguished by trenchant criticism, Dr. Sinha analyses the elements of Iqbal's creations and expresses his view that Iqbal was less than just to his own genius in that he reacted too strongly to mass psychology.

In a chapter dealing with non-Muslim reaction to Iqbal, Dr. Sinha says that notwithstanding his early sense of patriotism, he had no real attachment for India and that the Hindu's prejudice against Dr. Iqbal is not wholly unjustified.

Perusing the volume under review, one can see the progressive changes in the mental attitude of Iqbal and the result of what Dr. Sinha calls the mental obsession in respect of the subject of *Kufr* (infidelity) *versus* Islam, and the apprehension that Islam may disappear as a potent force in the world against the rising tide of nationalism. So far did Iqbal go that he deprecated the growth and expansion of liberalism in Turkey. Dr. Sinha's grievance against Iqbal as a poet is that instead of giving the right lead to his people, he mistook his vocation and failed to note that a true poet belongs to no community. In the course of a very acute summing-up of Iqbal's influence, Dr. Sinha observes that he is an important thinker from the point of view of mass psychology. He saw only one side of a thing but he proclaimed and emphasized that side vigorously. Dr. Sinha asserts that Iqbal is great because he said what his followers were vaguely beginning to feel. Dr. Sinha, nevertheless, epitomizes some of the messages embodied in Iqbal's poems. According to him, they placed action in the forefront of human activities, in the sense that he preached that life is not to be merely contemplative but to be assertive; that is, to be lived passionately, and strenuously, since the goal of mankind is to strive for supremacy in preference to submission.

Taking the volume by and large, it constitutes a notable piece of criticism. It chronicles a special phase in literary and national thought. It places in proper perspective the work of one whose mental transformations and political achievements took a line different from those of many of his literary confreres and countrymen. To deal so justly and so sympatheti-

cally with the work of one with whose main tenets one disagrees is to afford proof of a fairness and a sense of justice which are as rare as they are refreshing. And in addition to these rare qualities, Dr. Sinha wears his scholarship as a light mantle. To encyclopaedic learning, he unites a gift of discerning criticism and we are grateful to him for a stimulating study of a true poet as well as of a temperament and an epoch.

8. THREE LEADERS OF AMERICAN THOUGHT

America's Declaration of Independence and her subsequent history as well as her pioneering experiences in a rich and undeveloped country not unnaturally led to her progress along special and aggressively individual lines. Physical isolation from the mother country engendered a psychological isolationism which even the impacts, the conjoint efforts and inevitable comradeships of two world wars have not wholly eliminated. Dickens wrote his *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* in the eighteen forties; the manner in which Gen. Fladdock, Col. Diver and Jefferson Brick chose to twist the lion's tail and to demonstrate American superiority, the journalistic and election experiences of Martin and the invincible curiosity of the American journalist were satirized by the English author almost as unmercifully as "The New York Rowdy Journal" and "The New York Keyhole Reporter" were said to have dealt with England's errors and deficiencies.

Writing almost a hundred years later, that accomplished Chinese *littèrateur*, Lin Yutang, whose sense of humour is only equalled by his expertness in the handling of the English language, poked gentle fun at what he called the three great American vices—efficiency, punctuality and the desire for achievement and success—which, according to this writer, make the American unhappy and nervous. The same point was made by Thoreau who objected in his essays to America's frenzied addition to business and the post office. Relations are always keen critics of each other, but beneath all this mutual rivalry and good-humoured disparagement, there are certain traits which are the fundamentals of American life. In American philosophy, life has been regarded as a very strenuous affair and the average man is determined to make a real struggle to come out on the top. Speed and efficiency are the prime ideals. At the same time, the American's devotion

to family life is intense and the real rulers of America are the women and they have set the pace for everything including even the creation of that new American language which threatens to overwhelm the stately and leisurely Victorian diction.

The politics and the life of the United States have been a *terra incognita* to the average Englishman and only recently did the United States begin to develop the typical phenomena of European life, including a leisured aristocracy of business and wealth, a prosperous middle-class and a proletariat. At bottom, however, America and England pursue different paths and cherish different ideals. Their human values are different and the divergences may be discerned in the quality and outlook of the civil service, in the system of checks and balances between the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, in the position occupied by political, business and journalist caucuses and in several other particulars.

The English and the American people and not only they but the American people and the rest of the world have been thrown together at a decisive moment in world history. There is no point in assigning good and bad marks to countries or nations, or in bestowing uniform praise as Washington Irving did, or in being uncritically and virulently censorious like Miss Mayo and her tribe, including her journalistic disciple who has been recently seeking to achieve notoriety.

The commercial and diplomatic primacy now thrust upon America and Russia and the complicated workings of the Time Spirit have made it not only important but essential for all nations to understand each other, realize each other's failings and good points and evolve new methods of approach. As outlined by Wendell Willkie, peace and life have to be planned on a world basis hereafter and, in essence, the western world and its presumed supremacy must be regarded as being on trial. America has had an amazing economic development and there have been no internal barriers in North America—no barriers to the exchange of goods and ideas. The removal of all such barriers between India on the one

hand and China, Russia, England and America on the other is no less called for and there is no better means of effecting such an exchange than by considering and appraising the mental and spiritual outlook of other nations. Such an appraisal is best achieved by an analysis of the work of the leaders of thought in various countries. In America, the foremost of such leaders are Thoreau, Emerson and Whitman, who will form the subjects of this and two following talks.

I. THOREAU

Thoreau was one of the most original and consistent of men. He made few friends but one of them was Ralph Waldo Emerson with whom he lived for some years. But he was perfectly at home with bird and beast. Owing to a marvellous and innate characteristic, he was completely at ease in the forest and in the wild. Birds used to perch on his shoulders and wild squirrels fed out of his hands. Mentally he was a thorough-going revolutionary.

Very early in life, he made up his mind that people waste their existence in working for a living. He determined not to save or put by anything and he exclaims, "How vigilant we are—determined not to live by faith if we can avoid doing so." Starting with the doctrine that man only wants, even in the American climate, very little in the way of food, clothing, shelter and fuel, and reasoning that most of the luxuries and many of the so-called efforts of life are not only not indispensable but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind, he established himself in Walden Pont, his purpose being, in his own words, not to live cheaply, not to live dearly, but to transact the necessary business of life with the fewest obstacles. He supported himself by surveying and doing carpenter's work. He built his own log hut in the midst of a forest, next to a lake. He made and repaired his own clothes and when he wanted to buy anything he calculated how many hours' work would be necessary for the purpose and he cut some wood or did some surveying and earned only enough to pay for the things that he needed most urgently. Whilst

still young, he came to the conclusion that there was something essentially unclean about meat diet, basing his objection upon what he calls an unusually complete experience arising from having been his own butcher and scullion and cook as well as the gentleman for whom the dishes were served. A little bread and a few potatoes would have done as well, he says, but with much less trouble and filth. When a person said to him, "I wonder that you do not lay by any money when you love to travel and love the country", his answer was: "I am wiser than that. I have learnt that the swiftest traveller is he who goes by foot." Referring to the incident of his building a house he says, "I borrowed an axe, went down the woods, cut down some tall arrowy white pines. I returned the axe sharper than I received it." And in his own quaint manner, he added that at a cost of 28 dollars, which was all that his house cost him, he had enough shelter against the winter. In the accounts relating to this transaction set down carefully in his essay entitled *Walden*, he puts down the cost of transportation at 1 dollar 45 cents. This amount is the wage that he allots to himself for carrying the requisite timber and lime and the nails, hinges and screws on his back. For more than five years, he says in his essay on "Economy", he maintained himself solely "by the labour of his hands" and he further asserts in his own inimitable way, "I thus found that by working about six weeks in a year, I could meet all the expenses of my living and thus save the rest of the year for myself." In another essay headed "Where I lived and what I lived for" he calls upon all men to "simplify and simplify".

It will thus be seen that he was somewhat of an ascetic as well as a revolutionary and, in the language of one of his critics, an essentially wild man. These characteristics revealed themselves in his life. He rebelled against the puritan mode of life in New England. He was one of the most outspoken opponents of slavery; he refused to pay poll-tax to a Government which supported slavery and was sent to jail as he refused to pay the fine imposed upon him. Much to his disgust one

of his aunts paid the fine and he spent only one night in jail. He was a protagonist of non-co-operation and was willing to abide by the consequences thereof. The expression "Civil Disobedience" owes its origin to him. Emerson, who was one of his closest friends, described him thus: "He was bred to no profession. He was never married. He lived alone. He never went to church. He would never vote. He refused to pay any taxes to the State. He ate no flesh, drank no wine, never used tobacco. Never used a trap nor a gun; and when once asked at dinner 'What dish do you prefer?' his only answer was, 'the nearest'. He could guide himself about the woods on the darkest night by the touch of his feet. He could pick up at once an exact dozen of pencils, by the feeling, pace distances with accuracy, and gauge cubic contents by the eye."

In his sketch "Winter Visitors" he writes, "I once had a sparrow alight upon my shoulder for a moment while I was hovering in a garden. I felt I was more distinguished by that incident than by any epaulet that I could have earnt."

There have been very few to equal Thoreau in his ardent love and observation of Nature, whether it be on the rough seas or in the fields and forests around Walden. The records of these observations are a landmark in American literature. At the same time and in a real sense he was a cosmopolitan. He and his great contemporaries Hawthorne and Emerson at one time lived in the same village of Concord and the influence of their ideas radiated throughout the world, but those ideas to no small extent originated in Asia.

As in the case of Emerson, so with Thoreau, Indian thought played a vital part in his mental education. His avowed object was to get spiritual happiness by direct contact with Nature, thus rebelling against the whole machinery of western civilization. Writing in *Walden*, he says, "I grew in those seasons, like corn in the night. I realise what the Orientals mean by contemplation and the forsaking of works." He devotes a whole chapter in a series of essays entitled "The Week" to an exposition of Hindu thought and in particular to the *Bhagavad*

Gita. "It would be worthy of another occasion", he said, "to print together the collected scriptures of the Chinese, the Hindus, the Persians, the Hebrews and others as the scripture of mankind. Such a juxtaposition and comparison will help to liberalise the faith of man."

Thoreau was not a religious man as we usually understand religion. Of him, however, it could be said in the language of Romain Rolland : "It is the quality of thought and not its object which determines its source and allows us to decide whether or not it emanates from religion. If it turns fearlessly towards the search for truth at all costs with single-minded sincerity prepared for any sacrifice, I should call it religious."

In one of his brilliant essays Robert Louis Stevenson, making an appraisal of Thoreau's work, after paying a fine tribute to his passion for and absorption in nature denies to him the quality of humanity and terms him essentially selfish. He says: "I could as well shake hands with him as with the branch of an elm tree." He goes on to add that he was not altogether one of us and was shockingly devoid of weaknesses. We may venture to differ from Stevenson, for Thoreau was a man who proved that he believed in great causes and who could be roused in their defence as in the case of Captain John Brown. He could and did suffer for his faith, although many human ideals and tendernesses evoked no response in him.

He once stated, "The cost of a thing is the amount of what I call life which is required to be exchanged for it immediately or in the long run." Or, in other words, the price we have to pay for money is paid in liberty. He determined to pay as little in liberty as he possibly could. In his own arresting phraseology he proclaimed that to maintain oneself on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime if we will live simply and wisely. Ultimately, according to him :

"We are not what we are nor do we esteem or treat each other for such, but for what we are capable of being."

II. EMERSON

Emerson, for all his universality and varied culture, was

intrinsically a product of the 19th century and was greatly influenced by its technique and its particular approach to world problems. He inherited a strongly religious tradition, studied theology, and was even ordained as a priest, but it is characteristic of his innate independence of thought that he resigned his calling as he came to reject the nature of the sacrament and could not accept it as a divinely appointed ordinance of religion. He visited Europe in his thirties and earned the friendship of such varying types of men as Coleridge, Wordsworth and Carlyle. Returning to America, he established his reputation as a lecturer on topics relating to literature, biography and history. Philosophy was, however, his main objective. He strove throughout his life to correlate Nature with the soul of man and all his writings are in truth mystical and idealistic. The range of his studies was immense and he united a knowledge of the Upanishads and of Indian philosophy with a study of Persian poetry and specially of the contemplative allegorists, Hafiz and Nizami. Writing about another Persian mystic Feriduddin Attar he quotes from his Bird Conversations:

"The Highest is a sun mirror;
"Who comes to him sees himself therein;
"Sees body and soul and soul and body."

His poem entitled *Brahma* is an indication of his absorption of Indian ideology:

"If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways;
I keep, and pass, and turn again

* * *

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings:
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings."

Modern scientific thought and mathematical concepts are approximating to the old mystical idea that there is nothing real excepting thought and thought processes. Emerson was

one of the most clear-sighted and practical of mystics. One of his maxims was that Nature was the incarnation of thought; the world is the precipitation of the mind. But his essays are not mere philosophic exercises. Therein he expounded his own theory of life in all its aspects. He insisted in one of his most remarkable passages:

> "Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind."

In another essay entitled "Compensation", he stated that "Everything has two sides, a good and an evil. Every advantage has its tax. I learn to be content. But the doctrine of compensation is not the doctrine of indifferency. The thoughtless say, on hearing these representations—What boots it to do well? There is one event to good and evil; if I gain any good, I must pay for it; if I lose any good, I gain some other; all actions are indifferent.

"There is a deeper fact in the soul than compensation, to wit, its own nature. The soul is not a compensation, but a life. The soul *is*. Under all this running sea of circumstance, whose waters ebb and flow with perfect balance, lies the aboriginal abyss of real Being."

It will be perceived how closely he approaches to Vedantic thought. In his "Over-soul" he preaches:

> "From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things, and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all. A man is the facade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide. What we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself but misrepresents himself."

These passages disclose both his utter sincerity and his disdain of convention. Even when he discourses on culture, he is anxious to emphasize that a man has a range of affinities through which he can modulate the violence of any master-

tones that have a droning preponderance in his scale and succour himself. He insisted upon the importance and the influence of great men in the history of the human race. He studied individuals, historical characters, and even nations from the same point of view. Whether he wrote or spoke of Plato or Shakespeare or Napoleon or whether he discoursed on English traits, he asserted the importance of human values. He perceived the seamy side of English life and shrewdly observed that what are called English principles too often mean a primary regard to the interests of property. At the same time he was bold enough to assert to America that England was the best of actual nations, although he was careful to add that Englishmen cannot readily see beyond England and that their political contact is not decided by general views. In a remarkable passage, he added that England is not public in its bias; private life has its place of honour. His literary criticism was always penetrating and profound. He begins his essay on Shakespeare with the statement that great men are generally more distinguished by range than by originality; and dealing with the stuff that has been written about Shakespeare he utters a truth which we shall do well to remember. "Shakespeare is the only biographer of Shakespeare, and even he can tell nothing excepting to the Shakespeare in us; that is, to our most apprehensive and sympathetic hour."

In very different language from the *Gita*, though ultimately expounding the same message, he asks us to "build altars to the Blessed Unity which holds nature and souls in perfect solution, and compels every atom to serve a universal end." "Let us build altars to the Beautiful Necessity, which secures that all is made of one piece; that plaintiff and defendant, friend and enemy, animal and plant, food and water, are of one kind."

Like Thoreau, he was a strong opponent of slavery in every one of its forms and took an active part in the anti-slavery campaign. Outwardly, his life was uneventful but his transcendental philosophy and the rare combination in him of robust common sense with the mystic's introspection have profoundly influenced English as well as American thought,

and today he may well serve as an antidote to a partisan, narrow or purely utilitarian philosophy of life.

Emerson was one of those writers whose sayings have become the current coin of English speech. Some of them may be cited: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." "I advise a young person, 'Always do what you are afraid to do.' " "God offers to every mind His choice between truth and repose." "We are symbols and inhabit symbols." These utterances at once illustrate the calibre of his mind and the earnestness and bravery of his character.

Professor Laski refers to the facile optimism of Emerson and adds that he feels the summer but does not realize that it is the prelude to a winter.

This is hardly a just estimate of one who never forgot the roughnesses on the road to attainment.

One of his well-remembered maxims is perhaps the best summation of his life's work. In his essay on "Society and Solitude" he makes an appeal to all of us to hitch our wagon to a star. To do that and to traverse our several paths, difficult or easy, in the sight and by the light of a guiding star is our main task at present.

III. WHITMAN

Whitman's life was as variegated as his literary output. Although on both sides he was descended from substantial middle-class families, he moved at great ease amongst plain people with whom he preferred to live. As a boy, he was a great wanderer and worker and built up a magnificent physique. There was something in him of the unsoiled freshness of Nature. He was by turn, an office-boy, a printer, a carpenter and mason, a school-teacher and an editor of various newspapers and magazines. Before he was thirty, he published the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, his avowed object being to loosen the mind of America from what he called the superstitions and the tenacious anti-Democratic authority of Asiatic and European tradition. He pointed out that most of our matchless songs had grown out of the aristocratic ideal of life

and were expressive of it. He wanted to break with the past and adopted unconventional rhythms and reacted vigorously against the current ideals of society with its worship of wealth and rank. He was a champion of America and all that it stands for as well as a champion of its intellectual and physical independence. He wrote a few authentic lyrics but in the main he used a curious form of rhythmic prose or prose-poetry which was characteristic of the man. He himself described his verse by saying that its "likeness is not the stately solid palace nor the sculpture that adorns it nor the painting on its walls. Its analogy is the ocean, its verses are the billowing waves, ever rising and falling, perhaps sunny and smooth; perhaps wild with storm", "......alike in their nature as the rolling waves, but hardly any two exactly alike in size or measure, but always suggesting something beyond." At every turn he chronicled the mystery and unobtrusive greatness of Nature. He is willing to pay tribute to scientific knowledge, but says:

> "Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling;
> I but enter by them to an area in my dwelling."

Of philosophy and theology, he says:

> "Logic and sermons never convince,
> The damp of the night air drives deeper into my soul."

Again, like Thoreau, he feels completely at home with the cattle of the field:

> "I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd,
> I stand and look at them long and long,
> They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
> They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
> They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
> No one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things,
> Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,
> Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole

earth."

He made friends almost instantaneously with all sorts and conditions of men, sailors, ferrymen, pilots, bus-drivers and so forth. He was a poet of equality and on one occasion he sang:

"I speak the password primeval, I give the sign of
democracy,
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have
on the same terms.
Whoever degrades another degrades me.
And whatsoever is said or done returns at last to me."

What he claims for man he claims also for woman. He advocated the potential greatness of humanity; asked men to stand erect, self-possessed and reverencing the essentially divine in all humility. He would have nothing to do with religion which inculcated self-abasement:

"I say to mankind, be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious about
God.
Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four,
and each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my
own face in the glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every
one is sign'd by God's name,
And I leave them where they are, for I know that
whereso'er I go,
Others will punctually come for ever and ever."

Such a teaching conveyed and connoted a direct challenge to orthodox opinion, a challenge that was underlined when, as he often did, he sang of the human body and its functions and the commerce of the sexes in plain terms. His main creed and the inspiration of all that he wrote or sang was a glowing and all-embracing love of humanity. This love he clarified in these lines:

"Underneath Socrates I see, and underneath Christ the
divine I see

The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of
friend to friend,
Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and
parents, of city for city, and land for land."

The normal man, the daily path of ordinary humanity, he seeks to sublimate :

"Will you seek afar off? You surely come back at last,
In things best known to you finding the best, or as
good as the best,
In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest,
lovingest,
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this
place, not for another hour but this hour,
Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend,
brother, nighest neighbour—woman in mother,
sister, wife......"

As in the case of Emerson and Thoreau, Whitman was an advocate of the fundamental rights of mankind in the mass. He hated war but saw in the American civil war a great epic of humanity and he devoted to memories of Abraham Lincoln a section of *Leaves of Grass*. One of the poems in the series, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd", is one of the great elegies of the world. Whitman volunteered to work in the hospitals and on the field during the civil war; he devoted himself to the care of the wounded and the dying on the battlefield and in the hospital barracks and wrote in his diaries and to his mother about his experiences which were afterwards published in "Specimen Days" and "Drum Taps". His personal magnetism was incalculable. It was in fact deeper than speech. The eyes of the patients brightened at his approach and even his commonplace words were a source of invigoration. Sometimes he would read to the inmates, sometimes sit by the bedside, holding the hands of a dying man. In several years of unremitting service, he lived in the spirit of his teachings and his creed. He lost his health thereby but he never lost hope. In memorable strains, he epitomized the world's travail :

"I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all oppression and shame,
I hear secret and convulsive sobs from young men at anguish with themselves, remorseful after deeds done,
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the treacherous seducer of young women,
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love attempted to be hid, I see these sights on the earth,
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons upon labourers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the like ;
All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting look out upon,
See, hear, and am silent."

But, ultimately, reconciliation was his watch-word :

"Reconciliation, word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world."

He was not a facile optimist. It was enough for him that he was fighting on the right side. His song of the pioneers is symbolic of all that he dreamt of :

"Not for delectations sweet,
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious,
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment, Pioneers! O Pioneers!"

Like most American writers, including the living novelists, Upton Sinclair and Sinclair Lewis, Whitman typified the revolt against accepted canons, a revolt to be led by the clear-eyed and sympathetic believers in man's destiny. He regarded himself as "Imperturbe"—"standing at ease in Nature". In his song "Broad Axe", he appeals to the populace to rise at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons. He

pleads for a society of the faithfullest of friends, for a study of the cleanliness of the sexes. His audacity was superb. "I celebrate myself and sing myself" was the theme of one of his verses. He is not too reserved to refer to the eternal urge—the procreant urge of the world. He emphasizes that it is good to fall: "Battles are lost," he exclaims, "in the same spirit in which they are won." He hates the ordinary preacher and his sermon:

"Silent and amazed even when a little boy,
I remember I heard the preacher every Sunday put God in his statements,
As contending against some being or influence."

At the same time, he is clear as to his mission and his end:

"My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,
The great Camarado, the lover true for whom I pine will be there.
I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is."

Above all, as he fiercely averred, his gospel is not of a mere consistency:

"Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself (I am large, I contain multitudes). I shout my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world."

And so he lived and died giving his life for his country and his people and reaffirming by precept and by example his unshakable belief in the duty and the necessity of joy in life and in the ultimate destiny of all human beings. As one of his biographers has stated, the watchwords of the modern world—liberty, equality, democracy—are to him only the presentiment of the spirit and the divine comradeship of man.

Notwithstanding that he was an extrovert and wholly American in his outlook on life, Whitman was much affected

by eastern thought. In his "Passage to India" he meditated on the infinite greatness of the past:

> "The past—the infinite greatness of the past!
> (As a projectile formed, impell'd passing a certain line,
> still keeps on,
> So the present, utterly form'd impell'd by the past.)"

And in his own characteristic, way he regarded the "Passage to India" as a passage to primal thought:

> "Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,
> Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,
> The young maturity of brood and bloom,
> To realms of budding bibles."

9. THE PURPOSE OF A UNIVERSITY*

At a time like this, when men's minds are being tested anew and the foundations of society are being re-laid, when humanity has either to plunge into an abyss or evolve a scheme of life which is worth while and can last, it is perhaps not unprofitable to examine the purposes and the possibilities of higher education and particularly of University training which has to mould the mind and character of the coming generation. How shall we define a University? It is and should be a school of knowledge of all kinds consisting of teachers and learners drawn from all strata and coming from every quarter of the country. It should essentially be a place for the communication and circulation of thought by means of personal intercourse. This idea was aptly expressed by Newman, who, while admitting that the *litera scripta* is a record of truth and an instrument of teaching, yet added that if we wish to become exact and fully furnished in any subject of teaching which is diversified and complicated, we must consult the living man and listen to his living voice. It is specially necessary to bear this in mind, now that the appalling tendency is growing of substituting for such living discussion and intercourse notes delivered in classes and colleges and even instruction through correspondence or the radio. Bana, in his *Harshacharita*, speaking of a Forest University extant in the seventh century, describes it as "comprising devotees dead to all passions, Jains in white robes, followers of Krishna, many religious students, followers of Kapila, Lokayatikas or materialists, followers of Kanada, and of the Upanishads, students of legal institutions, students of the Puranas, adepts in sacrifices, experts in grammar and others diligently following their own tenets, raising doubts, resolving them and disputing, discussing and explaining their points of view." What a picture is presented of the right

First published in 1943.

approach to the ideals of all Universities, with reference to the catholicity of admission, freedom of discussion and universality of range! There is, however, one great difference between the methods of ancient learning and what is possible today. The medieval scholar in Europe, our ancient and even more recent pandits and the Chinese mandarins purported to be encyclopaedic and regarded all the learning of their time as within their compass, and the proverb then originated that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing—that one must drink deep at or taste not the Pierian Spring. But the content of human learning has now become so stupendous and specialization so elaborate and complicated that it would be inexpedient, even if it were possible, to reproduce amongst us such prodigies of learning as the Admirable Crichton or even Bacon, Gibbon and Macaulay. This aspect was never so penetratingly, though whimsically, described as by Robert Louis Stevenson in his "Apology for Idlers":

> "It is surely beyond a doubt that people should be a good deal idle in youth. For though here and there a Lord Macaulay may escape from school honours with all his wits about him, most boys pay so dear for their medals that they never afterwards have a shot in their locker, and begin the world bankrupt. And the same holds true during all the time a lad is educating himself, or suffering others to educate him.
>
> "If you look back on your own education, I am sure it will not be the full, vivid, instructive hours of truancy that you regret; you would rather cancel some lack-lustre period between sleep and waking in the class."

Another portrait was drawn by Asquith, who has said in one of his essays:

> "But there are memories and memories. One of the most dangerous gifts that the gods can bestow on the new-born infant is the portentous, omnivorous, unleaking memory of such men as Lord Macaulay and Lord Acton. It is far more difficult to evolve a

> discriminating than a merely receptive and retentive memory. For myself, while I often wish that I could remember half the things that I have forgotten, I sometimes wish that I could forget half the things that I remember."

The modern University may well set before itself the task, not of creating walking compendia of human learning, but of fashioning the minds of its scholars so that they may become supple and adaptable. As recent theories of psycho-analysis strongly emphasize, what is forgotten is perhaps as valuable as what is learnt; and wide vistas have now been opened up that point to the immense importance of the psycho-analytic point of view for an understanding of the structure and function of human culture. Without analysing the conflicting theories of Freud, Adler and Jung, one may observe that they all base themselves on a dynamic conception of the mind.

The evolution of the individual as well as of the race mind has now come to be regarded as a function not only of conscious but of unconscious knowledge, and what is learnt and forgotten during the years of preparation is deemed to be as valuable as what is learnt and retained. Sciences like mathematics and various classical and artistic pursuits have sometimes been assailed on the ground that they are of very little importance in 'real life'; but it is not the retention in the mind of the formulae and the processes that should be regarded as significant but rather the formative influences and the disciplinary value of such studies in relation to the unconscious as well as of the conscious being.

Carrying the discussion a step further, we may say that the study of Political Economy, which was once called the 'dismal science', reveals a record of exploded theories, including the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, so dear to the Victorians. But a knowledge of these developments is useful even in these days of planned economy and comprehensive State control, at least in order to deal with new theories which are a camouflaged rehash of old doctrines. Increasingly does it become manifest

that, as in the case of a lawyer preparing his brief, so in the case of students of the humanities and of the sciences, what matters is not to equip oneself with a knowledge of all possible details. One need only know the path on which to travel and where to look for the requisite material. The function of a University would thus seem to consist in endowing the minds of its alumni with such a basic capacity and such adaptiveness as well as such a general grounding as will enable them to discern where to search profitably for knowledge and for wisdom. Such an agility of mind and such a trained outlook and attitude are not generally attained through the labours in the lecture room or by the strenuous cramming of degree-getting notes, but arise from the commerce of mind with mind in the debating hall, in the laboratory and in the play-field. This exchange of opinion and co-ordinated effort may therefore be regarded as one of the fundamentals of educational endeavour; and to obtain the optimum advantage therefrom the pre-requisites are freedom from prejudice, from exclusions and from conservatisms or fanaticisms which are the antitheses of culture. The true environment of a student cannot be better delineated than in the invocation which constantly recurs in the Upanishads:

> ॐ सहनाववतु सहनौ भुनक्तु सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
> तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ॥
>
> "May we be protected; may we be supported and maintained; may our energies be rightly applied; may our studies be illustrious; and may there be no hatred amongst us!"

Peace and order in the land, the comprehensive and organized endowment of studies and of learning for their own sake, the evocation of all human energies for the acquisition of knowledge in one or more of its branches, concentration as a pre-requisite of achievement and, above all, freedom from prejudice and hostility, are the conditions pre-requisite to the individual learner sitting at his *guru's* feet, and the stress that is laid upon mellowness and catholicity is as valid today as it ever has been.

The inter-relation between the Universities and national

life and national programmes is a matter that is of no mere academic importance, but forms a topic of absorbing and immediate interest. Not many years ago, two separate and somewhat contradictory charges were levelled against developments even in Universities like Oxford and Cambridge; first, that they were too slow to adapt themselves to modern needs and demands and too conservative in acknowledging the importance of the social sciences and technical studies; and secondly, that they were in certain subjects encouraging an over-specialization that tended to segregate knowledge in separate compartments and that they did not seek to unify and integrate such knowledge. It was in order to answer such criticisms that a modern thinker, speaking of the University tradition, wrote as follows:

> "In the variegated interplay of minds and opinions, the measure of specialization which is made inevitable by the expansion of modern knowledge and the pressure of economic competition is partially humanized. At least the limitations of his study are brought constantly home to him, and at least the drift towards insulation is regarded as neither inevitable nor desirable. The social life of the Universities is itself a standing protest and safeguard against the development of higher education into a predominantly technical or vocational training. It preserves as an operative ideal—not always achieved but seldom allowed to lapse—the conception of a University as the home and shrine of a living body of knowledge and thought, organic in its wholeness but specialized in its application."

Amongst the drawbacks of such over-specialization is that partisanship, that risk of concentration on racial or communal or even cultural complexes and rivalries which have led to the rise of the totalitarian spirit and theories like those exalting special *Herrenvolk*.

Approaching the subject from a different angle, Lord Haldane, one of the most finished products of European Universities, in an address to the University of Wales, describes the

reforming and levelling influences of such a foundation on the soul of a people as a formative principle:

> "Just as the body grows by assimilating inorganic and foreign material from the environment and transforming it to its own use, just as the social organism develops in proportion as it gives rights to new classes of citizens and brings within itself and raises to a higher level and sense of responsibility those who in a previous generation would have been treated as unworthy of civil rights, so the mind of the scholar grows. It grows in strength and breadth as it assimilates what it costs a hard struggle and much renunciation of passing pleasure to grasp. But what is thus grasped is, in the process of being so grasped, transcended and freed from the appearance of being foreign and uninteresting."

The ideals so enunciated are not foreign to us in India. The history of education in ancient India supports such a thesis; and even the meaning of the term 'Upanishad', namely, approaching for instruction, presupposes a teacher or a group of teachers. The 9th *Anuvaka* of *Taittiriya Upanishad*, emphasizing the importance not only of reading (स्वाध्याय) but teaching (प्रवचन) is typical of the ancient life of the hermitages, each one of which was a University in miniature and where students, from time to time, are described as approaching with nominal gifts a preceptor for the purpose of sitting under his feet and educating themselves, not only through instruction, but through service. The persistent search for truth which was characteristic of Nachiketas in the *Kathopanishad* culminated in such institutions as Nalanda which combined the ideals of the *Gurukulas* and the *Viharas*. Not only did they comprise a cluster of students round a teacher or preceptor, but they also evolved into seats of universal learning. Nalanda, though established originally as a Buddhist institution, outgrew its pristine limits and soon began to teach the fundamentals of many faiths and of several secular sciences. Students came to it not only from all parts of India but from the whole of the then civilized world. It was one of the earliest Residential

Universities where, as so feelingly described by Newman, a multitude of young men came together, mixing with and learning from one another even if there be no one to teach them. As it was in those days, so should it be today. Such an institution co-ordinated and adjusted widely different notions and thus moulded the whole assemblage of students. In short, Nalanda fulfilled the object of every University—it taught students to form one another's character, made them learn the art of life and enabled them to constitute a harmonious society. It was justly regarded as a University of Universities, entrance to which was to be gained only after the pupil had passed out of other and smaller institutions, and some of the ancient records not only speak of something like a matriculation examination but also of a minimum age of admission fixed between 18 and 20. This was not our only University; there were also Valabhi, on the West coast, and Vikramasila and Kanchipuram and other institutions scattered through the country, many of which became really international centres. To some of these Universities, students resorted from Kanchipuram, in the south, to Peshawar, in the north, and from Turkey, in the west, to Java, Sumatra and Korea, in the Far East, and an early Indian description of a University gives the number of teachers as 1,000. It is only after the Department of Education was inaugurated in the Government of India and after the Educational Resolution of 1913 and the Sadler Report that we in India have re-commenced equating a University with residential facilities as well as a provision for comprehensive study not only in the sciences but in the humanities, in history and in economics. Even now, unfortunately, there is not enough co-operation between the Universities *inter se* or between them and the various scientific and other institutes in the country, and there is no real co-ordination of High School education and higher studies.

In the re-fashioning of the education of the future, not a few lessons can be learnt from the chronicles of the past. Equally shall we benefit from a contemplation of what has been brought about under our very eyes in countries like

Russia and China. Even in pre-revolutionary Russia, a great deal of attention was paid to linguistic and other abstruse studies and it is well known that, long before the War, many Sanskrit publications and an unabridged and very thorough and comprehensive Sanskrit Dictionary were produced in Russia. But in the course of a little more than a decade, the Soviet Republic revolutionized primary education and made it well-nigh universal. Not only have up-to-date scientific methods characterized its theoretical studies, but the practical application of science to agriculture, to stock-breeding, to mining and heavy industries has transformed the people into one of the most effective and dynamic of modern nations. The present generation of Russia has been literally transformed from the scientific and industrial point of view, and it is noteworthy that it is devoting attention not solely to the study of modern science and literature but even to Indian history, to Buddhism and to many modern Indian languages.

Perhaps, even more intrinsically marvellous has been the progress achieved in China. The Chinese have adopted a most far-seeing plan in respect of their national system. Though they realized that the struggle with Japan involved the whole of their future, they refused to recruit students, because they knew that the future of China depended upon a nucleus of educated people. Battered apparatus, partially destroyed libraries, and the equipment of some of the most important Chinese Universities and colleges were shifted westwards for thousands of miles. Within 30 years, the old system of classical education was modified and supplemented. The education of the masses was helped by the New Life Movement—a social development—inaugurated by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek for the benefit of the people of China. His gifted wife recently stated: "I have never known brain to have any sex." Women have been brought out of the seclusion of ages and their part in national uplift is as noteworthy as that of man. Education has been linked up with industries, and the character-building that has reinforced Chinese faith and inward resolution has been amongst the marvels of today.

At the risk of repeating what has now become common knowledge, I shall give a brief account of what has been done by the Chinese Universities and Chinese experts during the last few years. I quote from an issue of *Current Affairs*:

> "These selfless devotees of learning have already rebuilt their institutions in old temples and improvised mat-sheds thousands of miles from their original location. It was their rigid sense of duty that has saved theoretical lectures and practical classes from being discontinued during the war: instead, 'new citadels have been established and more scholars are being trained, often under trying conditions.' Figures prove this assertion most eloquently: of the 108 pre-war centres of higher education, ninety-one were 'rendered useless' through enemy action. Today not only have the ruined universities and colleges been replaced but another five have been added. The number of students once came to 31,188 only: today, 44,422 students are engaged in studies at 38 universities, 42 colleges and 33 technical schools, indicating a rise of 35 per cent approximately.
>
> "Difficulties of re-establishment have often been well-nigh insurmountable. The Hwa Chung College, for example, was destroyed twice till it found shelter in Hsichow, a rural town in Yunnan. Its first exodus took 41 days from Wuchang, its old site; the journey had to be made by water and road; and the second flight covered a railway trip of 2,200 km. The college is a merger of several old-standing institutions and depends much on grants from the Ministry of Education, on donations from the Boxer Indemnity Board and on subscriptions raised by the Harvard-Yensling Institute among others. The two removals have cost practically two-thirds of the College's annual budget. Added to this are losses sustained owing to the destruction of the library and laboratories. Of 60,000 volumes, only one-fourth could be salvaged and only a third part of

the laboratory equipment was saved from the ruinous effects of incendiary bombs. In spite of all these handicaps, the college has not only maintained its various arts and science subjects, but has devoted new science classes for experimenting with local dyes, tanning materials, etc., while it has also opened fresh arts departments for ethnical and morphological studies of tribes in the neighbourhood. The college is now situated in an environment of repose which enjoys the reputation of being the Switzerland of the East. Curiously enough, this Christian institution is today housed partly in a Buddhist Monastery, partly in a temple dedicated to Confucius, and partly in a family shrine. New wings had to be added when new subjects were taken up, which, of course, meant extra expenditure."

We many now turn to the stupendous literacy drive that began with the Republic but has assumed nation wide importance only recently. During 1939-40 the Republic spent 11,209,095 dollars on teaching 46,349,460 illiterate adults from 16 to 35 years old. It is certainly uphill work to render literate another 140,000,000 so that the country's population might receive at least rudimentary lessons in reading and writing And indefatigable as the Chinese educationists are, they are sure to achieve their end in another five or six years.

China's rapid progress in higher education during these war years is well illustrated by the following figures the *Central News* of Chungking has just released:

During the first semester of the academic year 1942, there were 132 institutes of higher learning, of which 53 were national, 28 provincial and 51 private. The 1942 figure shows an increase of 6 universities, 12 colleges, and 23 technical schools, compared with that at the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937.

As regards the number of students, the total enrolment during the first semester of 1942 was 63,605, compared with 31,186 upon the outbreak of the War.

Both China and Russia have sought to translate into practice, as far as may be, the principles underlying that Declaration of Human Rights which was not long ago framed by a group of thinkers under the chairmanship of Lord Sankey. In the document drawn up by them, the following statement occurs:

> "It is the duty of the community to equip every man with sufficient education to enable him to be as useful and interested a citizen as his capacity allows. Furthermore, it is the duty of the community to render all knowledge available to him and such special education as will give him equality of opportunity for the development of his distinctive gifts in the service of mankind. He shall have easy and prompt access to all information necessary for him to form a judgment upon current events and issues."

I have, in some detail, recounted these epic endeavours of Russia and China as they are not only a source of inspiration to us but also a warning that nations are re-born and grow only through sacrifice and travail and also by absorbing the lessons of the present in order to fashion the future. In such a task, many false idols have to be demolished and true divinities re-established. Bacon spoke of the Idols of the Tribe, Idols of the Cave, Idols of the Market-place and Idols of the Forum. Many of these Idols are being destroyed before our very eyes. What shall we put in their place? The civilization of the future will consist, as has been felicitously summarized, in an ever-present sense of the oneness of mankind and a respect for the dignity of man, as well as in an unlimited faculty for curiosity and research. We have too long built our society on the basis of love of clan, love of tribe and love of country. These affections and loyalties have their place in the scheme of the world, but they cannot, and should not, take the place that belongs to that newly emerging human and international society, in the building of which no institutions can play so important a part as the Universities.

In a very characteristic and illuminating paragraph in his *Outlook for Homo-Sapiens*, H. G. Wells has put the case thus:

"It has become necessary for man to be re-educated as a conscious world-citizen. He has to be prepared to take his place in a collective world-fellowship. The existing educational organizations of the world do not provide anything like a true realization of this necessity, nor do they establish the necessary conceptions of conduct that arise out of it. They need to be recast quite as much as and perhaps even more than the political framework."

Education, as Bertrand Russell has insisted, has been used to promote a degree of nationalism that is scarcely compatible with a truly international outlook. This, of course, has been most obviously demonstrated in totalitarian countries where education has been a part of the preparation for war as much as the manufacture of munitions. Text-books and works of research must henceforth encourage universal human loyalty, and history must cease to be written with an exclusively nationalistic bias brought about by falsification or unfair selection. Education, in other words, must help us to get rid of all provincialism, communal and racial prejudices and superstitions. It must raise us above racial, political and religious antagonisms and socialize our instincts.

The Roman poet Terence uttered a profound truth when he said: *homo-sum humani nihil a me alienum puto* ("I am a man and deem nothing that relates to man foreign to me"). Such a spirit in action, resolute, continuous and watchful, can alone prevent humanity from falling into those precipices at the sight of which it is reeling back at the close of a titanic as well as a confused struggle. Other abysses may yet overwhelm the human race unless the Universities and the wise men of the world re-educate mankind into a new culture and a new science of life.

In an open letter addressed by Prof. Harold Laski to President Roosevelt, he quoted the President's own Inaugural Address of the 4th March, 1933:

"Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself; plenty is at our door but a

generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily, this is because the rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure and abdicated.........They have no vision, and when there is no vision the people perish."

Such a vision needs constant awareness and a sedulous training of the mind and spirit. It arises from and co-exists with the "things that are more excellent", which have thus been outlined by a scholarly poet:

"The gains of science, gifts of art,
The sense of oneness with our kind,
The thirst to know and understand—
A large and liberal discontent;
These are the goods in life's rich hand,
The things that are more excellent."